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OUR LORD'S LIFE ON EARTH.

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OUR LORD'S

LIFE ON EARTH

BY THE

REV. WILLIAM HANNA, D.D. LL.D.

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VOL. V.

a.c.

LAST DAY OF OUR LORD'S PASSION

B-c.24

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NOTE TO VOL. V.

In this volume it is assumed that the Jewish Passover was not celebrated till the evening of the day on which our Lord was crucified. The writer is now satisfied that the passages in the Gospel by St. John, which seem to imply this, are capable of a different interpretation, and that it was on the same day with the Jews—Thursday, the 14th day of their month Nisan—that Jesus kept the Passover with his disciples.

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I.

THE BETRAYAL AND THE BETRAYER.[1]

"THE night on which he was betrayed"—that long, sleepless, checkered, troubled night—the last night of our Lord's suffering life—that one and only night in which we can follow him throughout, and trace his footsteps from hour to hour,—through what strange vicissitudes of scene and incident, of thought and feeling, did our Saviour on that night pass! The meeting in the upper chamber, the washing of the disciples' feet, the keeping of the Hebrew passover; the cloud that gathered round his brow, the sad warnings to Peter, and the terrible ones to Judas; the institution of his own Supper, the tender consolatory discourse, the sublime intercessory prayer; the Garden; its brief and broken prayers, its deep

[1] Matthew xxvi. 47-56; Mark xiv. 43-50; Luke xxii. 47-53; John xviii. 2-11.

and awful agony; the approach of the High Priest's band, the arrest, the desertion by all, the denials by one; the private examination before Annas, the public arraignment before the Sanhedrim; the silence as to all minor charges, the great confession, the final and formal condemnation to death;—all these between the time that the sun of that Thursday evening set, and the sun of Friday morning rose upon Jerusalem. We are all, perhaps, more familiar with the incidents of the first half of that night, than with those of the second. Of its manifold sorrows, the agony in the Garden formed the fitting climax. Both outwardly and inwardly, it was to the great Sufferer its hour of darkest, deepest midnight. Let us join him now as he rises from his last struggle in Gethsemane, and follow till we see him laid in Joseph's sepulchre.

The sore amazement is past. Some voice has said to the troubled waters of his spirit, Peace, be still! Instead of the stir and tumult of the soul, there is a calm and dignified composure, which never once forsakes him, till the same strange internal agony once more comes upon him on

the cross. "Rise," says Jesus, as for the third and last time he bends over the slumbering disciples in the Garden, "Rise, let us be going. Lo, he that betrayeth is at hand!" Wakeful as he has been whilst the others were sleeping, has he heard the noise of approaching footsteps? has he seen the shadows of advancing forms, the flickering light of torch and lantern glimmering through the olive leaves? It was not necessary that eye or ear should give him notice of the approach. He knew all that the betrayer meditated when, a few hours before, he had said to him, "That thou doest, do quickly." He had seen and known, as though he had been present, the immediate resort of Judas to those with whom he had so recently made his unhallowed bargain, telling them that the hour had come for carrying the projected arrangement into execution, and that he was quite sure that Jesus, as his custom all that week had been, would go out to Gethsemane so soon as the meeting in the upper chamber had broken up, and that there they could easily and surely, without any fear of popular disturbance, lay hold of him. The proposal was

hailed and adopted with eager haste, for there was no time to be lost,—they had but a single day for action left. The band for seizing him was instantly assembled—"a great multitude," quite needlessly numerous, even though resistance had been contemplated by the eleven; a band curiously composed,—some Roman soldiers in it from the garrison of Fort Antonia, excited on being summoned to take part in a midnight enterprise of some difficulty and danger; the captain of the Temple guard, accompanied by some subordinates, private servants of Annas and Caiaphas, the High Priests, with some members even of the Sanhedrim among them;[1] a band curiously accoutred,—with staves as well as swords, with lanterns and torches, that, clear though the night was—the moon being at the full,[2] they might hunt their victim out through all the shady retreats of the olive gardens, and prevent the possibility of escape. Stealthily they cross the Kedron, with Judas at their head, and come to the very place

[1] See Luke xxii. 52.

[2] We know it was so from the day of the month on which the Passover was celebrated.

where all this while Jesus has been enduring his great agony. Yes; this is the place where Judas tells them they will be so sure to find him. Now, then, is the time for the lanterns and the torches. They are saved the search. Stepping out suddenly into the clear moonlight, Jesus himself stands before them, and calmly says, "Whom seek ye?" There are many in that band who know him well enough, but there is not one of them who has courage to answer—"Thee." A creeping awe is already on their spirits. They leave it to others, to those who know him but by name, to say, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus says to them, I am he; and as soon as he has said it, they go backward, and fall every one to the ground. Has some strange sight met their eye, has Jesus been momentarily transfigured as on the Mount, have some stray beams from the concealed glory burst forth upon them, or is it some inward terror shot by a hand invisible through their hearts? Whatever the spell be that has stripped them of all strength, and driven them backwards to the ground, it lasts but for a brief season. He who suddenly

laid it on as quickly lifts it off. But for that short time, what a picture does the scene present! Jesus standing in the quiet moonlight, calmly waiting till the prostrate men shall rise again; or turning, perhaps, a pensive look upon his disciples cowering under the shade of the olive-trees, and gazing with wonder at the sight of that whole band lying flat upon the ground. For a moment or two, how still it is! you could have heard the falling of an olive-leaf. But now the spell is over, and they rise. The Roman soldier starts to his feet again, as more than half ashamed, not knowing what should have so frightened him. The Jewish officer gathers up his scattered strength, wondering that it had not gone for ever. Again the quiet question comes from the lips of Jesus, Whom seek ye? They say to him, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus answers, "I have told you that I am he. If therefore ye seek me, let these go their way: that the saying might be fulfilled which he spake, Of them which thou hast given me I have lost none."

Perfectly spontaneous, then, on the part of our Divine Redeemer, was the delivering of himself

up into the hands of his enemies. He who by a word and look sent that rough hireling band reeling backwards to the ground, how easily could he have kept it there; or how easily, though they had been standing all around him, could he have passed out through the midst of them, every eye so blinded that it could not see him, every arm so paralysed that it could not touch him? Judas knew how in such a manner he had previously escaped. He must have had a strong impression that it would not be so easy a thing to accomplish the arrest, when he told the men, "Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is he; take him, and hold him fast." Take him; hold him! it will only be if he please to be taken and to be held that they will have any power to do it. This perfect freedom from all outward compulsion, this entirely voluntary surrender of himself to suffering and death, enter as necessary elements into the great Atonement. And is not its essential element—its being made for others—shadowed forth in this outward incident of the Redeemer's life, "Take me," he said, "but let these go their way." It was to throw a protect-

ing shield over this little flock, that he put forth his great power over that mixed multitude before him, and made them feel how wholly they were within his grasp. It was to acquire for the time such a mastery over them that they should consent to let his disciples go. It was no part of their purpose beforehand to have done so. They proved this, when, the temporary impression over, they seized the young man by the way, whom curiosity had drawn out of the city, whom they took to be one of his disciples, and who with difficulty escaped out of their hands.

"Take me, but let these go their way." John saw, in the freedom and safety of the disciples thus secured, a fulfilment of the Lord's own saying in the prayer of the Supper-chamber, "Them that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost." We cannot imagine that the beloved disciple saw nothing beyond protection from common earthly danger in the expression which he quotes; but that he saw, in the very manner in which that kind of protection had been extended, a type or emblem of the higher and spiritual deliverance that Christ has accom-

plished for his people by his deliverance unto death. Freedom for us, by his suffering himself to be bound; safety for us, by the sacrifice of himself; life for us, by the death which he endured: have we not much of the very soul and spirit of the atonement in those few words, "Take me, but let these go their way"? It is the spiritual David, the great good Shepherd, saying, "Let thine hand be laid upon me; but as for these sheep, not, O Lord my God, on them."

Judas stood with those to whom Jesus said, Whom seek ye? Along with them he reeled back and fell to the ground. Along with them he speedily regained his standing posture, and was a listener as the Lord said, I have told you that I am he; inviting them to do with him as they wished. There is a pause, a hesitation; for who will be the first to lay hand upon him? Judas will relieve them of any lingering fear. He will show them how safe it is to approach this Jesus. Though the stepping forth of Christ, and the questions and answers which followed, have done away with all need of the preconcerted signal, he will yet go through all that he had

engaged to do; or, perhaps, it is almost a mechanical impulse upon which he acts, for he had fixed on the thing that he was to do toward accomplishing the arrest; he had conned his part well beforehand, and braced himself up to go through with it. Hence, when the time for action comes, he stops not to reflect, but lets the momentum of his predetermined purpose carry him along. He salutes Jesus with a kiss. If ever a righteous indignation might legitimately be felt, surely it was here. And if that burning sense of wrong had gone no further in its expression than simply the refusal of such a salutation, would not Christ have acted with unimpeachable propriety? But it is far above this level that Jesus will now rise. He will give an example of gentleness, of forbearance, of long-suffering kindness without a parallel. Jesus accepts the betrayer's salutation. He does more. He says a word or two to this deluded man: — "Friend, wherefore art thou come?" 'Is it possible that thou canst imagine, after all that passed between us at the supper-table, that I am ignorant of thy purpose in this visit? I know that purpose well; thou knowest

that I do; if not, I will make a last attempt to make thee know and feel it now. Thought of, cared for, warned in so many ways, art thou really come to betray such a Master as I have ever been to thee? But though thou hast made up thy mind to such a deed, how is it that thou choosest such a cloak as this beneath which to conceal thy purpose? The deed is bad enough itself without crowning it with the lie of the hypocrite,'—"Judas, betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss?"—the last complaint of wounded love, the last of the many and most touching appeals made to the conscience and heart of the betrayer; rebuke and remonstrance in the words, but surely their tone is one more of pity than of anger; surely the wish of the speaker was to arrest the traitor, if it were not yet too late. Had Judas yielded even at that last moment; with a broken and a contrite heart had he thrown himself at his Master's feet, to bathe with tears the feet of him whose cheek he had just polluted with his unhallowed kiss; looking up through those tears of penitence, had he sought mercy of the Lord, how freely would that mercy have been extended

to him! who can doubt that he would have been at once forgiven? But he did not, he would not yield; and so on he went, till there was nothing left to him but the horror of that remorse which dug for him the grave of the suicide.

We often wonder, as we read his story, how it was ever possible, that, in the face of so many, such explicit, solemn, affectionate appeals, this man should have so obstinately pursued his course. We should wonder, perhaps, the less, if we only reflected what a blinding, hardening power any one fixed idea, any one settled purpose, any one dominant passion, in the full flush and fervour of its ascendency, exerts upon the human spirit; how it blinds to consequences that are then staring us in the very face; how it deadens to remonstrances to which, in other circumstances, we should at once have yielded; how it carries us over obstacles that at other times would at once have stopped us; nay, more, and what perhaps is the most striking feature of the whole, how the very interferences, for which otherwise we should have been grateful, are resented; how the very appeals intended and fitted to arrest,

become as so many goads driving us on the more determinedly upon our path. So it was with Judas. And let us not think that we have in him a monstrous specimen of almost superhuman wickedness. We should be nearer the truth, I suspect, if we took him as an average specimen of what the passion of avarice, or any like passion, when once it has got the mastery, may lead any man to be and do. For we have no reason to believe of Judas, that from the first he was an utter reprobate. Our Lord we scarcely can believe would have admitted such a man to the number of the twelve. Can it be believed of him that when he first joined himself to Jesus, it was to make gain of that connexion? There was but little prospect of worldly gain in following the Nazarene. Nor can we fairly attribute that obstinacy which Judas showed in the last great crisis of his life, to utter deadness of conscience, utter hardness of heart. The man who no sooner heard the death-sentence given against his Master, than—without even waiting to see if it would be executed—he rushed before the men by whom that sentence had been pronounced—the very

men with whom he had made his unholy covenant, from whom he had got but an hour or two before the price of blood—exclaiming in the bitterness of his heart, "I have sinned, in that I have betrayed innocent blood;"—the man who took those thirty pieces of silver, which his itching palm had so longed to clutch, but which now were burning like scorching lead the hand that grasped them, and flung them ringing on the temple floor, and hurried to a lonely field without the city walls and hanged himself, dying in all likelihood before his Master,—let us not think of him that he was utterly heartless—that he had a conscience seared as with a hot iron.

What, then, is the true explanation of his character and career? Let us assume that, when he first united himself to Christ, it was not of deliberate design to turn that connexion into a source of profit. He found, however, as time ran on, that to some small extent it could be so employed. The little company that he had joined had chosen him to be their treasurer, to hold and to dispense the slender funds which they pos-

sessed. Those who are fond of money, as he was, are generally careful in the keeping, thrifty in their use of it. Judas had those faculties in perfection, and they won for him that office of trust, to him so terribly dangerous. The temptation was greater than he could resist. He became a pilferer from that small bag. Little as it had to feed upon, his passion grew. It grew, for he had no higher principle, no better feeling, to subdue it. It grew, till he began to picture to himself what untold wealth was in store for him when his Master should throw off that reserve and disguise which he had so long and so studiously preserved, and take to himself his power, and set up his kingdom—a kingdom which he, in common with all the apostles, believed was to be a visible and temporal one. It grew, till delay became intolerable. At the supper in Bethany, it vexed him to see that box of ointment of spikenard, which might have been sold for three hundred pence, wasted on what seemed to him an idle piece of premature and romantic homage. It vexed him still more to hear his Master rebuke the irritation he had displayed, and speak now

once again, as he had been doing so often lately, of his death and burial, as if the splendid vision of his kingdom were never to be realized. Could nothing be done to force his Master on to exercise his kingly power? These Scribes and Pharisees, who hated him so bitterly, desired nothing so much as to get him into their hands. If once they did so, would he not, in self-defence, be obliged to put forth that power which Judas knew that he possessed? And were he to do so, things could not remain any longer as they were. The Passover—this great gathering of the people—would soon go past, and he, Judas, and the rest, have to resume their weary journeyings on foot throughout Judea. Thus and then it was, that, in all likelihood, the thought flashed into the mind of the betrayer to go and ask the chief priests what they would give him if he delivered Jesus into their hands. They offered him thirty pieces of silver, a very paltry bribe—the price in the old Hebrew code of a slave that was gored by an ox—less than £5 of our money;—a bribe insufficient of itself to have tempted even a grossly avaricious man, in the position in which Judas

was, to betray his Master, knowing or believing that it was unto death. Why, in a year or two Judas might have realized as much as that by petty pilferings from the apostolic bag. But this scheme of his would bring his Master to the test. It would expedite what, to his covetous, ambitious heart, had seemed to be that slow and meaningless course to a throne and kingdom which his Master had been pursuing. Not suspecting what the immediate and actual issue was to be, he made his unholy compact with the High Priests. He made it on the Wednesday of the Passion week. Next evening he sat with Jesus in the supper-chamber. He found himself detected; more than one terrible warning was sounded in his ears. Strange, you may think, that instead of stopping him in his course, these warnings suggested, perhaps for the first time, the thought that what he had engaged to do might be done that very night. The words, "What thou doest do quickly," themselves gave eagerness and firmness to his purpose; for, after all, though Jesus seemed for the time so much displeased,—let this scheme but prosper,—let the kingdom be set up, and would he not be

sure to forgive the offence that had hastened so happy a result?

Have we any grounds for interpreting in this way the betrayal? Are we right in attributing such motives to Judas? If not, then how are we to explain his surprise when he saw his Master, though still possessing all his wonderful power, as he showed by the healing of the servant's ear, allow himself to be bound and led away like a felon? How are we to explain the consternation of Judas when he learned that though Jesus publicly, before the Sanhedrim, claimed to be the Christ, the Son of God, the King of Israel, yet, instead of there being any acquiescence in that claim, a universal horror was expressed, and on the very ground of his making it, he was doomed to the death of a blasphemer? Then it was, when all turned out so differently from what he had anticipated, that the idea of his having been the instrument of his Master's death entered like iron into the soul of Judas. Then it was, that, overwhelmed with nameless, countless disappointments, vexations, self-reproaches, his very living to see his Master die

became intolerable to him, and in his despair he flung his ill-used life away.

Accept such solution, and the story of the betrayal of our Lord becomes natural and consistent; reject it, and have you not difficulties in your way not to be got over by any amount of villany that you may attribute to the traitor? But does not this solution take down the crime of Judas from that pinnacle of almost superhuman and unapproachable guilt on which many seem inclined to place it? It does; but it renders it all the more available as a beacon of warning to us all. For if we are right in the idea we have formed of the character and conduct of Judas, there have been many since his time, there may be many still, in the same way, and from the operation of the same motives, betrayers of Christ. For everywhere he is a Judas, with whom his worldly interests, his worldly ambition, prevail over his attachment to Christ and to Christ's cause; who joins the Christian society, it may not be to make gain thereby,—but who, when the occasion presents itself, scruples not to make what gain he can of that connexion; who,

beneath the garb of the Christian calling, pursues a dishonest traffic; who, when the gain and the godliness come into collision, sacrifices the godliness for the gain. How many such Judases the world has seen, how much of that Judas spirit there may be in our own hearts, I leave it to your knowledge of yourselves and your knowledge of the world to determine.

Let us now resume our narrative of the arrest. Whatever lingering reluctance to touch Christ had been felt, that kiss of Judas removed. They laid their hands upon him instantly thereafter, grasping him as if he were a vulgar villain of the highway, and binding him after the merciless fashion of the Romans. This is what one, at least, of his followers cannot bear. Peter springs forth from the darkness, draws his sword, and aims at the head of the first person he sees; who, however, bends to the side, and his ear only is lopped off. To Christ an unwelcome act of friendship. It ruffles his composure, it impairs the dignity of his patience. For the first and only time a human creature suffers that he may be protected. The injury thus done he must instantly

repair. They have his hand within their hold, when, gently saying to them, "Suffer ye thus far," he releases it from their grasp, and, stretching it out, touches the bleeding ear, and heals it:—the only act of healing wrought on one who neither asked it of him, nor had any faith in his healing virtue; but an act which showed how full of almighty power that hand was which yet gave itself up to ignominious bonds. Then said Jesus to Peter, "Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword. Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then shall the Scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be? The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" He was drinking then, even at that time, of the same cup in regard to which he had been praying in the Garden. Not only his agonies in Gethsemane and on the Cross, but all his griefs, internal and external, were ingredients in that cup which, for us and for our salvation, he took, and drank to the very dregs—a cup put by his Father's

hand into his, and by him voluntarily taken, that the will of his Father might be done, and that the Scriptures might be fulfilled. All this about the cup, and his Father, and the Scriptures, spoken for the instruction and reproof of Peter, must have sounded not a little strange to those Chief Priests and scribes and elders who have come out to be present, at least, if not to take part in the apprehension, and who are now standing by his side. But for them, too, there must be a word, to show them that he is after all a very brother of our race, who feels as any other innocent man would feel if bound thus, and led away as a malefactor. "And Jesus said unto the chief priests, and captains of the temple, and the elders, which were come to him, Be ye come out, as against a thief, with swords and staves? When I was daily with you in the temple, ye stretched forth no hands against me: but this is your hour, and the power of darkness." A short hour of fancied triumph theirs; the powers of darkness permitted for a short season to prevail: but beyond that hour, light, and a full, glorious, eternal triumph his.

"Then all the disciples forsook him and fled." That utter desertion had been one of the incidents of this night of sorrows upon which his foreseeing eye had already fixed. "The hour cometh," he had said to them in the upper chamber, "yea, is now come, that ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave me alone: and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me." It was only during that hurried march from the garden to the judgment-hall that Jesus was left literally and absolutely alone: not one friendly eye upon him; not one friendly arm within his reach. But this temporary solitude, was it not the type of the inner, deeper solitude, in which his whole earthly work was carried on?—not the solitude of the hermit or the monk,—he lived ever with and among his fellow-men; not the solitude of pride, sullenly refusing all sympathy and aid; not the solitude of selfishness, creating around its icy centre a cold, bleak, barren wilderness; not the solitude of sickly sentimentality, for ever crying out that it can find no one to understand or appreciate. No; but the solitude of a pure, holy, heavenly

spirit, into all whose deeper thoughts there was not a single human being near him or around him who could enter; with all whose deeper feelings there was not one who could sympathize; whose truest, deepest motives, ends, and objects, in living and dying as he did, not one could comprehend. Spiritually, and all throughout, the loneliest man that ever lived was Jesus Christ. But there were hours when that solitude deepened upon his soul. So was it in the Garden, when, but a stone-cast from the nearest to him upon earth, even that broken, imperfect sympathy which their looking on him and watching with him in his great sorrow might have supplied, was denied to him, and an angel had to be sent from heaven to cheer the forsaken one of earth. So was it upon the cross, in that dread moment, when he could no longer even say, "I am not alone, for my Father is with me;" when there burst from his dying lips that cry—a cry from the darkest, deepest, dreariest loneliness into which a pure and holy spirit ever passed—"My God, my God! why hast thou forsaken me?"

Shall we pity him,—in that lonely life, these

lonely sufferings, that lonely death? Our pity he does not ask. Shall we sympathize with him? Our sympathy he does not need. But let us stand by the brink of that deep and awful gulf into which he descended, and through which he passed; and let wonder, awe, gratitude, love, enter into and fill all our hearts, as we remember that that descent and that passage were made to redeem our souls from death, and to open up a way for us into a sinless and sorrowless heaven.

II.

THE DENIALS, REPENTANCE, AND RESTORATION OF ST. PETER.[1]

WHEN they saw their Master bound and borne away, all the disciples forsook him and fled. Two of them, however, recovered speedily from their panic. Foremost now, and bravest of them all, John first regained his self-possession, and returning on his footsteps followed the band which conveyed Jesus to the residence of the High Priest. Coming alone, and so far behind the others, he might have found some difficulty in getting admission. The day had not yet dawned; and at so early an hour, and upon so unusual an occasion, the keeper of the outer door might have hesitated to admit a stranger; but John had some acquaintance with the domestics of the High Priest, and so got entrance; an entrance

[1] Matthew xxvi. 57-59, 69-75; Mark xiv. 54, 55, 66-72; Luke xxii. 54-62; John xviii. 15-27; Mark xvi. 7; John xxi. 15-17.

which Peter might not have ventured to ask, or asking, might have failed to get, had not John noticed him following in the distance, and, on looking back as he entered, seen him standing outside the door. He went, therefore, and spoke to the porteress, who at his instance allowed Peter to pass in. The two disciples made their way together into the interior quadrangular hall, at the upper and raised end of which Jesus was being cross-examined by Annas. It was the coldest hour of the night, the hour that precedes the dawn, and the servants and officers had kindled a fire in that end of the hall where they were gathered. Peter did not wish to be recognised, and the best way he thought to preserve his incognito was to put at once the boldest face he could upon it, act as if he had been one of the capturing band and had as good a right to be there as others of that mixed company, as little known in this palace as himself. So stepping boldly forward, and sitting down among the men who were warming themselves around the fire, he made himself one of them. The woman who kept the door was standing near. The strong

light of the kindling fire, falling upon that group of faces, her eye fell upon Peter's. That surely, it occurred to her as she looked at it, was the face of the man whom she had admitted a few minutes ago, of whose features she had caught a glimpse as he passed by. She looks again, and looks more earnestly.[1] Her first impression is confirmed. It is John's friend; that Galilean's friend; some friend too, no doubt, of this same Jesus. She says so to a companion by her side; but not satisfied with that, wondering, perhaps, at the way in which Peter was comporting himself, she waits till she has caught his eye, and going up to him she says: "Art not thou also one of this man's disciples?"—a short, abrupt, peremptory, unexpected challenge. It takes Peter entirely by surprise. It throws him wholly off his guard. There they are, the eyes of all those men around now turned inquiringly upon him; and there she is—a woman he knows nothing of—perhaps had scarcely noticed as he passed quickly through the porch,—a woman who can know nothing about him, yet putting that pert

[1] See John xviii. 17; Mark xiv. 67; Luke xxii. 56.

question, to which, if he is to keep up the character he has assumed, there must be a quick and positive reply. And so the first hasty falsehood escapes his lips. The woman, however, won't believe him when he says that he does not understand her question. Both to himself and to others around her, she re-affirms her first belief. Peter has to back his first falsehood by a second and a third: "Woman, I am not one of this man's disciples; I know him not."—Peter's first denial of his Master.

He has now openly committed himself, and he must carry the thing through as best he can. He is not at ease, however, in his seat with the others around the fire. The glare of that light is too strong. Those prying eyes disturb. As soon as conveniently he can, without attracting notice, he rises and retires into the shadow of the porch, through which in entering he had passed. A cock now crows without. He hears but heeds it not. Perhaps he might have done so, had not another woman—some friend in all likelihood of the porteress with whom she had been conversing—been overheard by him affirm-

ing most positively, as she pointed him out, "This fellow also was with Jesus of Nazareth." And she too comes up to him and repeats the saying to himself. The falsehood of the first denial he has now to repeat and justify. He does so with an oath, declaring, "I do not know the man."—Peter's second denial of his Master.

A full hour has passed. The examination going on at the other end of the hall has been engrossing the attention of the onlookers. Peter's lost composure and self-confidence have in a measure been regained. He is out in the hall again, standing talking with the others; no glare of light upon his face, yet little thinking all the while that by his very talking he is supplying another mode of recognition. And now for the third time, and from many quarters, he is challenged. One said, "Of a truth this fellow was with him." A second: "Did I not see thee with him in the garden?" A third: "Thy speech bewrayeth thee." Beset and badgered thus, Peter begins to curse and to swear, as he affirms, "I know not the man of whom ye speak." —Peter's third and last denial of his Lord.

Truly a very sad and humbling exhibition this of human frailty. But is it one so rare? Has it seldom been repeated since? Have we never ourselves been guilty of a like offence against our Saviour? Is there no danger that we may again be guilty of it? That we may be prepared to give a true answer to such questions, let us consider wherein the essence of this offence of the Apostle consisted, and by what steps he was led to its commission. His sin against his Master lay in his being ashamed and afraid to confess his connexion with him, when taunted with it at a time when apparently confession could do Christ no good, and might damage greatly the confessor. It was rather shame than fear, let us believe, which led to the first denial. It was in moral courage, not physical, that Peter failed. By nature he was brave as he was honest. It was no idle boast of his, "Lord I will follow thee to prison and to death." Had there been any open danger to be faced, can we doubt that he would gallantly have faced it? Had his Master called him to stand by his side in some open conflict with his enemies, would

Peter have forsaken him? His was one of but two swords in the garden; those two against all the swords and other weapons of that multitude. But even against such odds, Peter, bold as a lion, drew his sword, and had the use of it been allowed would have fought it out till he had died by his Master's side. But it is altogether a new and unexpected state of things, this willing surrender of himself by Jesus into the hands of his enemies; this refusal, almost rebuke, of any attempt at rescue or defence. It unsettles, it overturns all Peter's former ideas of his Master's power, and of the manner in which that power was to be put forth. He can make nothing of it. It looks as if all those fond hopes about the coming kingdom were indeed to perish. Confused, bewildered, Peter enters the High Priest's hall. Why should he acknowledge who he is, or wherefore he is there? What harm can there be in his appearing for the time as indifferent to Christ's fate as any of these officers and servants among whom he sits? That free and easy gait of theirs he assumes; goes in with all they say; perhaps tries to join with them in their coarse, untimely mirth. First easy

yet fatal step, this taking on a character not his own. He is false to himself before he proves false to his Master. The acted lie precedes the spoken one; prepares for it, almost necessitates it. It was the rash act of sitting down with those men at that fireside, that assumption of the mask, the attempt to appear to be what he was not, which set Peter upon the slippery edge of that slope, down which to such a depth he afterwards descended. Why is it we think so? Because we have asked ourselves the question, Where all this while was his companion John, and how was it faring with him? He too was within the hall, yet there is no challenging or badgering of him. The domestics indeed know him, and he may be safe from any interference on their part; but there are many here besides who know as little about him as they do about Peter. Yet never once is John questioned or disturbed. And why, but because he had joined none of their companies, had attempted no disguise; his speech was not heard bewraying him. Had you looked for him, you would have found him in some quiet shaded nook of that quadrangle, as near his

Master as he could get, yet inviting no scrutiny, exposing himself to no detection.

That first false act committed, how natural with Peter was all that followed! His position, once taken, had to be supported, had to be made stronger and stronger to meet the renewed and more impetuous assaults. So is it with all courses of iniquity. The fatal step is the first one, taken often thoughtlessly, almost unconsciously. But our feet get hopelessly entangled; the weight that drags us along the incline gets at every step the heavier, till onward, downward we go into depths that at the first we would have shuddered to contemplate. In this matter, then, of denying our Lord and Master Jesus Christ, let us not be high-minded, but fear; and, taking our special warning from that first false step of Peter, should we ever happen to be thrown into the society of those who bear no liking to the name or the cause of the Redeemer, let us beware lest, hiding in inglorious shame our faces from him, we be tempted to say or to do what for us, with our knowledge, would be a far worse thing to say or do, than what was said and done by

Peter, in his ignorance within the High Priest's hall.

The oaths with which he sealed his third denial were yet fresh on Peter's lips,[1] when a second time the cock crew. And that shrill sound was yet ringing in his ears when "the Lord turned and looked upon Peter." How singularly well-timed that look! The Lord is waiting till the fit moment come, and instantly seizes it. It might be wrong in us to say that but for the look, the second cock-crowing would have been as little heeded as the first. It might be wrong in us to say that, but for the awakening sound, the look would of itself have failed in its effect. But we cannot be wrong in saying that the look and the sound each helped the other, and that it was the striking and designed coincidence of the two—their conjunction at the very time when Peter was confirming his third denial by oaths—that formed the external agency which our Lord was pleased to contrive and employ for stirring the sluggish memory and quickening the dead con-

[1] "Immediately, while he yet spake, the cock crew." Luke xxii. 60. See also Matt. xxvi. 74.

science of the apostle. And sluggish memories, dead consciences, are they not often thus awakened by striking outward providences co-operating with the Word and with the Spirit? Have none of us been startled thus, as Peter was, amid our denials or betrayals of our Master? Let us bless the instrument, whatever it may be, by which so valuable a service is rendered, and see in its employment only another proof of the thoughtful, loving care of him who would not let us be guilty of such offences without some means being taken to alarm and to recover.

Let us believe, however, that of the two—the sound and the look—the chief power and virtue lay in the latter. "The Lord turned." He turned from facing those scowling judges; from listening to all the false testimony brought forward against him; from bearing all the insults that masters and servants were heaping upon him; from all the excitements of a trial which he knew was to end in his condemnation unto death. Forgetful of self, still thoughtful of his own, "He turned and looked upon Peter." Was that a look of anger; of unmingled, unmitigated rebuke?

Such a look might have sent Peter away to hang himself as Judas did; but never to shed such tears of penitence as he went out to weep. The naked eye of the very Godhead might be on us; but if from that eye there looked out nothing but stern, rebuking, relentless wrath, the look of such an eye might scorch and wither, but never melt and subdue hearts like ours. Doubtless there was reproach in the look which Jesus bent upon Peter; gentle reproach, all the more powerful because of its gentleness. But that reproach, quickly as it was perceived, and keenly as it was felt, formed but a veil to the tender, forgiving, sympathizing love which the Master felt for the erring disciple. Volumes of pity and compassion lay enfolded in that look. It told the apostle how well He, of whom he had just been saying that he knew him not, knew *him*; how thoroughly he knew him when he forewarned him of his fall. But it told Peter at the same time, that it was no thought or feeling of the injury or wrong that had been done personally to himself, which made Jesus fix such an earnest gaze upon him. Not so much of himself as of Peter was he

thinking: not for himself, but for Peter was he caring. It was the thought of that wrong which Peter had been doing to himself, which winged the look, and sent it on its hallowed errand into Peter's heart. He felt, as it fell upon him, that it was the look of one, not angrily complaining of injury, not indignantly demanding redress, but only desiring that Peter might feel how unkindly, ungratefully, ungenerously, he had acted towards such a Master; of one who wished him above all things to be assured that if he but saw and felt his error, there was readiness and room enough in his heart to receive him back at once and fully into favour,—to forgive all, forget all, be all to him he had ever been. Another kind of look the apostle might have encountered unflinchingly, but not a look like that. Instantly there flashed upon his memory those words of prophetic warning, spoken a few hours before in the guest-chamber. Thrice had Jesus forewarned him, that before the cock crew twice, he should thrice deny him. Had he never thought of these words till now? In the distraction of the moment he might have allowed the first cock-

crowing to pass unheeded, but how, during the whole hour[1] which followed his first two denials, should that striking warning never once have occurred to his memory? Very strange it seems to us; but very strange are the moods and passions of the mind—what is remembered by it, and what forgotten, when some new strong tide of thought and feeling rushes in, and fills, and agitates the soul. In the strange, unexpected, perilous position in which he had so suddenly been placed, Peter had forgotten all;—the meeting of the upper chamber, the triple warning, the "Verily, verily, I say unto you," which had then sounded in his ears. But now, as if the awakened memory, by the very fulness and vividness of their recall, would repair the past forgetfulness, he sees all, hears all again. Those words of warning are anew ringing in his ears, and as he thinks how fearfully exact the fulfilment of those forgotten predictions of his Master has been, a sense of guilt and shame oppresses him. He can bear that look no longer; he turns and hurries out of the hall, seeking a place to

[1] Luke xxii. 59.

shed his bitter tears—tears not like those of Judas, of dismal and hopeless remorse, but of genuine and unaffected repentance. He goes out alone, but whither? It was still dark. The day had not yet dawned. He would not surely at such an hour, and in such a state of feeling, go back at once into the city, to seek out and join the others who had fled. Such deep and bitter grief as his seeks solitude; and where could he find a solitude so suitable as that which his Lord and Master had so loved? We picture him as visiting alone the Garden of Gethsemane, not now to sleep while his Lord is suffering; but to seek out the spot which Jesus had hallowed by his agony, to mingle his tears with the great drops of blood which had fallen down to the ground.

Where and how he spent the two dismal days which followed we do not know. After that look from Him in the judgment-hall he never saw his Lord alive again. But as on the third morning we find John and him together, we may believe that it was from the lips of the beloved disciple —the only one of all the twelve who was present

at the trial before Pilate, and who stood before the cross—that Peter heard the narrative of that day's sad doings; how they bound and scourged, and mocked and spat upon the Lord; how they nailed him to the cross, and set him up in agony, to die. And at each part of the sad recital, how would that heart, softened by penitence, be touched; how would it grieve Peter to remember that he too had had a share in laying such heavy burdens on the last hours of his Lord's suffering life! That Master whom he had so dishonourably and ungratefully denied, was now sleeping in the grave. O but for one short hour with him—a single interview—that he might tell him how bitterly he repented what he had done, and get from his Master's living, loving lips the assurance that he had been forgiven! But that never was to be. He should never see him more. Never! grief-blinded man? Thine eye it sees not, thine ear it hears not, neither can that sorrow-burdened heart of thine conceive what even now Jesus is preparing for thee. The third morning dawns. The Saviour rises triumphant from the grave; in rising, sets the angels

as sentries before the empty tomb; gives to them the order that, to the first visitants of the sepulchre, this message shall be given: "Go, tell the disciples *and Peter*, that he is risen from the dead." This message from the angel, Peter had not heard[1] when he and John ran out together to the sepulchre, and found it empty. But he heard it not long after. Who may tell what strange thoughts that singling out of *him*—that special mention of his name by those angelic watchers of the sepulchre—excited in Peter's heart? How came those angels to know or think of him at such a time as this? It could not have been their own doing. They must have got that message from the Lord himself, been told by him particularly to name Peter to the women. But was it not a thing most wonderful, that, in the very act of bursting the barriers of the grave, there should be such a remembrance of him on the part of that Master whom he had so lately denied? Was it not an omen for good? Peter had his rising hopes confirmed, his doubts and

[1] Mary Magdalene, on whose report they acted, had seen no angel on her first visit to the sepulchre.

fears all quenched, when, some time in the course of that forenoon, waiting till John and he had parted—waiting till he could meet him alone, and speak to him with all the greater freedom and fulness—Jesus showed himself to Peter. Before he met the others to speak peace, he hastened to meet Peter to speak pardon. One of the first offices of the risen Saviour was to wipe away the tears of the penitent.

"Go your way," said the angel to the women at the sepulchre, "tell his disciples and Peter, that he goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see him, as he said unto you." The Paschal festival, and Christ's own presence, kept the apostles for eight days and more in the holy city. But as, after those two interviews in the evenings of the first two Lord's days of the Christian Church, Jesus did not appear to them again, the eleven, presuming that he had gone before them to Galilee, also went thither. The return to their old homes and haunts, the sight of their nets and fishing-boats, the absence of any specific instructions as to the future, suggest to some of them the thought of taking up again

their earlier occupation. Seven of them are walking together one evening by the side of the lake. It looks tempting; the boats and the nets are near, and it is the best hour of all the day for fishing. Peter—the very one from whom we should have expected a first proposal of this kind to come—says to them, "I go a fishing." They all go with him. They toil all the night, but catch nothing. As morning breaks, they see a man standing on the shore, seen but dimly through the haze, but near enough for his voice to be heard across the water. "Children," he says, "have ye any meat?" They tell him they have none. "Cast the net," he replies, "on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find. And now they are not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes." This could scarcely fail to recall to the memory of some at least within the boat, that other miraculous draught of fishes, by which, now nearly three years before, three out of the twelve apostles were taught to forsake all and follow Jesus, that he might make them fishers of men. This repetition of the miracle was nothing else than a symbolic renewal of that first commission,

intended to teach the twelve that their apostolic calling still held good. There was one, however, of the seven who gathered round Jesus at the morning meal which he spread for them on the shore, when their fisher's toil was over, whose position towards that commission and apostleship had become peculiar. He had been in the habit of taking a very prominent place among the twelve, and often acted as their representative and spokesman. But on the night of the betrayal, he had played a singularly shameful and inconsistent part. They had all, indeed, forsaken their Master; but who would have thought that the very one of them who that night had been so vehement in his assertions that though all men, all his fellow-disciples, should forsake his Master, he never would, should yet so often, and with such superfluous oaths, have denied that he ever knew, or had anything to do with Jesus? True it was that Jesus had forgiven Peter. His fellow-disciples, also, had forgiven that overboastful magnifying of himself above the others. There was something so frank about him, and so genuine; such outgoings of an honest, manly, kindly,

generous nature, that they could not bear against him any grudge. They were all now on their old terms with one another. But how will it stand with Peter if that apostolic work has to be taken up again? How will he feel as to resuming his old position among the twelve? Will he not, in the depth of that humility and self-distrust taught him by his great fall, shrink now from placing himself even on the same level with the others? And how will his Lord and Master feel and act as to his re-instatement in that office from which by his transgression he might be regarded as having fallen? To all these questions there were answers given, when Jesus, once more singling Peter out, said to him, "Simon, son of Jonas,"—the very giving him his old and double name sounding as a note of preparation for the important question which was to follow,—"Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these," thy brethren, my other disciples, do?—a gentle yet distinct enough reminder of that former saying: "Though all men should be offended, I never will;" a delicate yet searching probe, pressed kindly but firmly home into the depths of Peter's heart; a

skilful method of testing and exhibiting the truth and depth of Peter's repentance, without subjecting him to the painful humiliation of having the terrible denials of his Master brought up and dwelt upon, either by Jesus in the way of charge, or by himself in the way of confession. The best way of trying any man whether he has really repented of any sinful deed is to place him again in the like circumstances, and see if he will act in the like manner. This is the way in which the Lord now tries Peter. Will he again compare himself with the others; will he set himself above them; will he say as much now about his love being greater than theirs, as he did then about his courage; will he repeat that boasting which was the precursor of his fall? How touchingly does his answer show that he perfectly understood the involved reference to the past; that he had thoroughly learned its humbling lessons? No longer any comparing himself with or setting himself above others,—the old Peter-like frankness and fervour in the "Yea, Lord, I love thee," but a new humility in it, for he will not say how much he loves, still less will venture to say that

he loves more than others; and a deeper humility still, for he will not offer his own testimony as to the love he feels, he will trust no more his own deceitful heart, nor ask his Lord to trust it, but throwing himself upon another knowledge of that heart which had proved to be better than his, he says, "Yea, Lord, *thou knowest* that I love thee." Our Lord's reply is a most emphatic affirmative response to this appeal. It is as if he had said at large, 'Yes, Simon Barjona, I do know that thou lovest me. I know, too, that thou wouldst make no boast of thy love, nor in that or anything else set thyself any longer above thy fellows; and now, that these thy brethren might know and see it too, how hearty thy penitence has been, how thoroughly it has done its humbling work, and how readily I own and acknowledge thee as being all to me thou ever wert; therefore now, in presence of these brethren, I renew to thee the apostolic commission—publicly reinstate thee in the apostolic office—"Feed my sheep." I need not ask thee again whether thou lovest me more than others. I will prove thee no more by that allusion to the past; but I have once, twice, thrice to

put that other general question to thee, that as three times I warned thee, and three times thou didst deny me, even so I may three times restore thee.' Can we wonder that Peter was grieved, when for the third time that question, Lovest thou me? was put to him. It was not the grief of doubt, as if he suspected that Jesus only half-believed his word; but the grief of contrition, a grief which grew into a deeper sadness at the distinct allusion which the thrice-repeated question evidently bore to his three denials. And yet even in that sadness there is comfort; the comfort of feeling that his affectionate Master is giving him the opportunity of wiping away his threefold denial by threefold confession. And so, with a fuller heart, and in stronger words than ever, will he make avowal of his love: "Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee."

III.

THE TRIAL BEFORE THE SANHEDRIM.[1]

THE Jews regarded their day as beginning at one sunset and ending with the next. This interval was not divided into twenty-four parts or hours of equal and invariable length. They took each day by itself, from sunrise to sunset, and each night by itself, from sunset to sunrise, and divided each into twelve equal parts or hours; so that a Jewish hour, instead of being, as it is with us, a fixed measure of time, varied in its length as each successive day and night varied in theirs at different seasons of the year. Neither did the Jews begin as we do, reckoning the twelve hours, into which the day and night were respectively divided, from midday and midnight, but from sunset and sunrise; their sixth hour of

[1] John xviii. 19-24; Luke xxii. 66-71; Matt. xxvi. 59-68; Mark xiv. 53-65.

the night corresponding thus with our twelve o'clock, our midnight; their sixth hour of the day with our twelve o'clock, our midday. There were but two periods of the year, those of the autumnal and vernal equinox, when, day and night being exactly equal, the length of the hours in both was precisely the same with our own. It was at one of these periods, that of the vernal equinox, that the Jewish Passover was celebrated, and it was on the day which preceded its celebration that our Lord was crucified. It was close upon the hour of sunrise on that day that Jesus was carried to the Prætorium, to be examined by the Roman Governor. Assuming that he entered Gethsemane about midnight, and remained there about an hour, the interval between the Jewish seventh and twelfth hour of the night, or between our one and six o'clock of the morning, was spent in the trial before Annas and Caiaphas, both reckoned as High Priests, the one being such *de jure*, the other *de facto*. They seem to have been living at this time in the same palace into the hall of which Jesus was carried immediately after his arrest. It was in this hall,

and before Annas, that Jesus was subjected to that preliminary informal examination recorded in the eighteenth chapter of the Gospel of St. John.[1] He was to be formally tried, with show at least of law, before the Sanhedrim, the highest of the Jewish courts, but this could not be done at once. Some time was needed to call the members of that court together, and to consult as to the conduct of the trial. Annas was there from the first, awaiting the return of the band sent out to arrest the Saviour. His son-in-law Caiaphas was in all likelihood by his side, eager both and ready to proceed. But they could not act without their colleagues, nor pronounce any sentence which they might call upon the Roman Governor at once to ratify and execute. Whilst the messengers, however, are despatched to summon them, and the members of the Sanhedrim are gathering, Annas may prepare the way by sounding Christ, in a far-off, unofficial, conversational manner, and may perhaps extract from his replies some good material upon which the court may afterward proceed. Calling Jesus before him, he puts to

[1] John xviii. 19-24.

him some questions about his disciples, and his doctrine; questions fair enough, and proper enough as to their outward form, yet captious and inquisitorial, intended to entangle, and pointing not obscurely to the two main charges to be afterwards brought against him, of being a disturber of the public peace, and a teacher of blasphemous doctrines.

First, then, about his disciples: Annas would like to know, what this gathering of men around him meant; this forming them into a distinct society. By what bond or pledge to one another were the members of this new society united; what secret instructions had they got; what hidden objects had they in view? Though Christ might not reveal the secrets of this combination, yet, let it but appear—as by his very refusal to give the required information it might be made to do—that an attempt was here being made to organize a confederation all over the country, how easy would it be to awaken the jealousy of the Roman authorities, and get them to believe that some insurrectionary plot was being hatched which it was most desirable at once to crush, by cutting off the ringleader. Such we know to have been

the impression so diligently sought to be conveyed into the mind of Pontius Pilate. And Annas began by trying whether he could get Jesus to say anything that should give a colour of truth to such an imputation. Penetrating at once his design, knowing thoroughly what his real meaning and purposes were, our Lord utterly and indignantly denies the charge that was attempted thus to be fastened on him. Neither as to his disciples, nor as to his doctrine,—neither as to the instructions given to his followers, nor as to the bonds of their union and fellowship with one another, had there been anything of the concealed or the sinister; not one doctrine for the people without, and another for the initiated within; no meetings under cloud of night in hidden places for doubtful or dangerous objects. "I spake," said Jesus, "openly to the world; I ever taught in the synagogue and in the temple, whither the Jews always resort; and in secret"—that is, in the sense in which I know that you mean and use the term secret—"have I said nothing; why askest thou me?"

This question tells the judge how naked and

bare that hypocritical heart of his lies to the inspection of his prisoner: "Why askest thou me?" Put that question, Annas, to thy heart, and let it answer thee, if it be not so deceitful as to hide its secrets from thine own eyes. "Why askest thou me?" Art thou really so ignorant as thou pretendest to be; thou, who hast had thy spies about me for well-nigh three years, tracking my footsteps, watching my actions, reporting my words? "Why askest thou me?" Dost thou really care to know, as these questions of thine would seem to indicate? then go, "ask them which heard me, what I have said unto them: behold, they know what I said." A boldness here, a touch of irony, a stroke of rebuke, which, perhaps, our Lord might not have used, had it been upon his seat and in his office as President of the Sanhedrim that the High Priest was speaking to him; had it not been for the mean advantage which he was trying to take of him; had it not been for the cloak of hypocrisy which, in trying to take that advantage, he had assumed. We shall see presently, at least, that our Lord's tone and manner were somewhat different when his

more formal trial came on. Christ's sharp sententious answer to Annas protected him—and perhaps that was one of its chief purposes—from the repetition and prolongation of the annoyance. It seems to have silenced the High Priest. He had made but little by that way of interrogating his prisoner, and he wisely gives it up. Whatever resentment he cherished at being checked and spoken to in such a manner, he refrained from any expression of it, biding the hour when all his bitter pent-up hatred of the Nazarene might find fitter and fuller vent.

But there was one of his officers who could not so restrain himself, who could not bear to see his master thus as he thought insulted, and who, in the heat of his indignation, struck Christ with the palm of his hand,—some forward official, who thought in this way to earn his master's favour, but who only earned for himself the unenviable notoriety of having been the first to begin those acts of inhuman violence with which the trial and condemnation of Jesus were so largely and disgracefully interspersed. Others afterwards came forward to mock and jostle and blindfold,

and to smite, to spit upon our Lord, to whom he answered nothing; but when that first stroke was inflicted, with the question, "Answerest thou the High Priest so?" Jesus did not receive it in silence. He answered the question by another: "If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil; but if well, why smitest thou me?" Best comment this on our Lord's own precept: "If thy brother smite thee on the one cheek, turn to him the other also;" and a general key to all like Scripture precepts, teaching us that the true observance of them lies not in the fulfilment of them as to the letter, but in the possession and exhibition of the spirit which they prescribe. How much easier would it be when smitten upon the one cheek, to turn the other for a second stroke, than to be altogether like our Lord in temper and spirit under the infliction of the stroke! More difficult, also, than any silence, to imitate that gentle answer. The lips might be sealed, while the heart was burning with anger. But it was out of the depths of a perfect patience, a gentleness which nothing could irritate, that the saying came: "If I have spoken evil, bear wit-

ness of the evil ; but if well, why smitest thou me ?" "Think," says Chrysostom, "on him who said these words, on him to whom they were said, and on the reason why they were said, and these words will, with divine power, cast down all wrath which may rise within thy soul."

But now at last the whole Council has assembled, Caiaphas has taken his seat as President, and they go more formally to work. Their object is to convict him of some crime which shall warrant their pronouncing upon him the severest sentence of the law. That the appearance of justice may be preserved,[1] they must have witnesses ; these witnesses must testify to some speech or act of Christ, which would involve him in that doom ; and as to any specific charge, two of these witnesses must agree before they can condemn. They could have got plenty of witnesses to testify as to Christ's having within the last few days openly denounced themselves, the

[1] It would appear that in holding their Council during the night, and in condemning Christ solely upon his own confession, the Jews violated express enactments of their own code. See "Jésus devant Caïphe et Pilate—Réfutation du chapitre de M. Salvador, intitulé 'Jugement et Condamnation de Jésus,'" par M. Dupin.

members of the Sanhedrim, as fools and blind, hypocrites, a very generation of vipers; but to have convicted Christ upon that count or charge would have given to their proceeding against him the aspect of personal revenge. They could have got plenty of witnesses to testify as to Christ's having often broken and spoken slightingly of ordinances and traditions of the Pharisees; but there were Sadducees among their own members, and the Council might thus have been divided. They could have got plenty of witnesses to testify as to Christ's frequent profanation of the Sabbath; but how should they deal with those miracles, in or connected with the performance of which so many of these cases of profanation of the Sabbath had occurred? They are in difficulty about their witnesses. They bring forth many; but either the charge which it is proposed to establish against Christ comes not up to the required degree of criminality, or the clumsy witnesses, brought hastily forward, undrilled beforehand, break down in their testimony. Two, however, do at last appear, who seem at first sight to agree; but when minutely questioned as to the words which

they allege that more than two years before they had heard him utter about the destruction of the Temple, they report them differently, so that "neither did their witness agree." The prosecution is in danger of breaking down for want of proof.

All this time, the accused has observed a strange—to his judges an unaccountable and provoking silence. He hears as though he heard not—cared not—were indifferent about the result. It is more than the presiding judge can stand. He rises from his seat, and, fixing his eyes on Jesus, says to him, "Answerest thou nothing?" Hast thou nothing to say?—no question to put, no explanation to offer, as to what these witnesses testify against thee? Jesus returns the look, but there is no reply: he stands as silent, as unmoved as ever. Baffled, perplexed, irritated, the High Priest will try yet another way with him. Using the accustomed Jewish formula for administering an oath—a formula recited by the judge, and accepted without repetition by the respondent—"I adjure thee," said the High Priest, "by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be

the Christ, the Son of God." Appealed to thus solemnly, by the first magistrate of his nation, sitting in presidency over the highest of its courts, our Lord keeps silence no longer. But it is in words that must have struck every auditor with wonder that he replies to the High Priest's adjuration. He sees quite through the purpose of the High Priest. He knows quite well what will be the immediate issue of his reply. Yet he says, "I am;" I am the Christ, the Son of the Blessed; "and ye"—ye who are sitting there now as my judges,—"ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven." It is our Lord's own free and full confession, his public and solemn assertion of his claim to the Messiahship, and Sonship to God. The time for all concealment or reserve is past. Jesus will now openly, not only take to himself his own name, assume his office, and assert his Divine prerogatives, but in doing so, he will let those earthly dignitaries, who have dragged him thus to their tribunal, before whose judgment-seat he stands, know that the hour is coming which shall witness a strange

reversal in their relative positions,—he being seen sitting on the seat of power, and they, with all the world beside, seen standing before his bar, as on the clouds of heaven he comes to judge all mankind.

The effect of this confession, this sublime unfolding of his true character, and prophecy of his second coming, was immediate, and, though extraordinary, not unnatural. The High Priest, as soon as he drank in the real meaning of the words which fell on his astonished ear, grasped his mantle, and rent it in real or feigned horror, exclaiming, "He hath spoken blasphemy." Then rose up also the other judges who were sitting round him, excited to the highest pitch, each more eager than the other, to put this question to the accused, "Art thou then the Son of God?" to all of whom there is the same answer as to Caiaphas, "I am." "What further need, then," says the President of the Court to his brother judges, "have we of witnesses? Now ye have heard his blasphemy. What think ye?" "What need we," they say to him, taking up his own words, "any further witnesses? for we ourselves

have heard it out of his own mouth." And they "answered and said, He is guilty of death."[1] The unanimous judgment of the Court is delivered,[2] and the sentence of death pronounced.

Is there not one among all those judges within whose heart there rise some strange misgivings as he dooms this man to die; not one whom the calmness, the serenity, the dignified bearing of the Lord, as he made the great revelation of himself before them, have impressed with wonder and with awe? Perhaps there is; but the tumult of that vehement condemnation carries him away; or if any inward voice be pleading for the accused, he quenches it by saying that, if Jesus really submit to such a sentence being executed upon him, he cannot be the Messiah, he must be a deceiver; and so he lets the matter take its course.

The pronouncing of the sentence from the bench was the signal for a horrible outburst of violence in the hall below. As if all license was theirs to do with him what they liked—as if they knew they could not go too far; could do nothing that their masters would not approve, perhaps

[1] See Deut. xiii. 5; xviii. 20. [2] Mark xiv. 64.

enjoy—the men who held Jesus[1] (for it would seem they could not trust him, bound though he was, to stand free before them), began to mock him, to buffet him, to spit upon him, and to cover his eyes with their hands, saying, as they struck at him, "Prophesy to us who it is that smiteth thee." "And many other things blasphemously spake they against him." How long all this went on we know not. They had to wait till the proper hour arrived for carrying Jesus before the Roman Governor, and it was thus that the interval was filled up; the meek and the patient One, who was the object of all this scorn and cruelty, neither answering, nor murmuring, nor resisting, nor reproaching. There was but one man in that hall to look with loving, pitying eyes on him who was being treated thus; and, in the words which that spectator penned long years thereafter in his distant lonely island, we may see some trace of the impression which the sight of the great sufferer made—"I, John, who also am your brother and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and *patience* of Jesus Christ."

[1] Luke xxii. 63.

The malignant antipathy to Christ cherished by the hierarchical party at Jerusalem had early ripened into an intention to cut him off by death. It was at the beginning of the second year of his ministry that he healed the impotent man at the pool of Bethesda. "The man departed, and told the Jews that it was Jesus which had made him whole. And therefore did the Jews persecute Jesus, and seek to slay him, because he had done these things on the Sabbath-day. But Jesus answered them, My Father worketh hitherto, and I work. Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not only had broken the Sabbath, but said also that God was his Father, making himself equal with God."[1] So far from repudiating this interpretation of his words, Jesus accepted and confirmed it; enlarging the scope, without altering the nature of

[1] John v. 15-18. When, on a succeeding Sabbath, Christ healed the man who had a withered hand, the Pharisees "were filled with madness, and straightway took counsel with the Herodians against him how they might destroy him."—Luke vi. 11; Mark iii. 6. Christ's movements were, from the beginning and throughout, more regulated by the pressure of the persecution to which he was exposed, than a cursory reading of the Gospel narrative might lead us to imagine.—See John ii. 24; iv. 1-3; Mark i. 45; Luke v. 17; xi. 53-56.

what he had said about the Father, claiming not only unity in action, but unity in honour with him.[1] So vengeful in their hatred did the Jews of Jerusalem become, that Jesus had to seek safety by retiring from Judea. In the course of the two years which followed, Jesus paid only two visits to the metropolis, and both were marked by outbreaks of the same implacable animosity. His appearance in Jerusalem at the Feast of Tabernacles excited such an instant and intense spirit of vindictiveness, that one of our Lord's first sayings to the Jews in the Temple was, "Why go ye about to kill me?" So well known was the purpose of the rulers that it was currently said, "Is not this he whom they seek to kill? But, lo, he speaketh boldly, and they say nothing unto him. Do the rulers know indeed that this is the very Christ?"[2] Hearing that such things were said, the rulers sent their officers to seize him, but failed in the attempt to get him into their hands. They then confronted him in the Temple, and openly charged him with

[1] John v. 33. [2] John vii. 25, 26.

bearing a false record about himself. A strange dialogue ensued, in the course of which, instead of retracting anything which he had formerly said, or attempting to explain it away, Jesus not only exalted himself above Abraham, in whom they boasted, but declared, in language which they could only understand as an assumption by him of Divine prerogatives: "Before Abraham was, I am." So exasperated were they when he said this, that they took up stones to cast at him; and had he not made himself invisible, and so passed through the midst of them, they would, in the heat of the moment, and without troubling themselves about any formal trial, have inflicted on him the doom of the blasphemer. Having lingered for a few days longer in the neighbourhood of Jerusalem, wrought a memorable cure on the man born blind, and delivered that memorable discourse which John has preserved to us in the tenth chapter of his Gospel, Jesus again retired from the capital. On his return, two months afterwards, at the Feast of Dedication, he was met as he walked in the Temple in Solomon's Porch, and with some show of candour

and anxiety, the question was put to him, "How long dost thou make us to doubt? if thou be the Christ, tell us plainly." Jesus did not tell them so plainly as they desired, about his being the Christ, but he told them plainly enough, as he had done before, that he was the Son of God. "I," said he, "and my Father are one. Then the Jews took up stones again to stone him. Jesus answered them, Many good works have I showed you from my Father: for which of those works do ye stone me? The Jews answered him, saying, For a good work we stone thee not, but for blasphemy; and because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God." Again our Lord had to protect himself from the storm of their wrath by retreating to Peræa. The message from the mourning sisters recalled him from this retreat. The raising from the dead of a man so well known as Lazarus, in a village so near to Jerusalem as Bethany, produced such an effect that a meeting of the Sanhedrim was summoned to deliberate as to what should be done. The design which they had so long cherished, they now more deliberately than ever determined to accom-

plish: "From that day forth they took counsel together to put him to death."[1]

Though hurried at last in the time and manner of its execution, it was no hasty purpose on the part of the members of the Jewish Council to put our Lord to death. The proposal of Judas did not take them by surprise, the arrest in the garden did not find them unprepared. They must often have deliberated how they should proceed if they once had him in their hands. And when he was at last before them for formal trial, and they were eager to get him condemned, they had not for the first time to consider what charges they should bring against him, and by what evidence the charges might be sustained. Witnesses enough of all kinds were within their easy reach, nor had they any scruple as to the means they took to get from them the evidence they wanted. But with all their facilities, and all their bribery, they could not substantiate a single charge against Jesus which would justify them in condemning him. Why, when they found themselves in such difficulty, did they not summon into their pre-

[1] John xi. 53.

sence some of those who had heard Jesus commit that kind of blasphemy, upon the ground of which they had twice, upon the spur of the moment, attempted to stone him to death? Testimony in abundance to that effect must have been lying ready to their hands. It seems clear to us that the first and earnest desire of the members of the Sanhedrim was to convict Christ of some other breach of their law, sufficient to justify the infliction of death; and that it was not till every attempt of this kind had failed, that, as a last resort, the High Priest put our Lord himself upon his oath. In the form of adjuration which he employed, two separate questions were put to Christ: the one, Whether he claimed to be the Christ; the other, Whether he claimed to be the Son of God. These were not identical. The latter title was not one which either Scripture or Jewish usage had attached to the Messiah. The patent act of blasphemy which our Lord was considered as having perpetrated in presence of the Council was not his having asserted his Messiahship, but his having appropriated the other title to himself. When, after Christ had given his first

affirmative reply to the complex challenge of Caiaphas, the other judges interfered to interrogate the prisoner, they dropped all allusion to the Messiahship. "Then said they all, Art thou then the Son of God?" and it was upon our Lord's reassertion that he was,—upon that, and that alone, that he was doomed to death as a blasphemer. For it was perfectly understood between the judges and the judged, that, in thus speaking of himself, Jesus claimed a peculiar, an intrinsic affinity,—oneness in essence, knowledge, power, and glory, with the Father. His judges took Jesus to be only man, and looking upon him as such, they were so far right in regarding him as guilty of blasphemous presumption. In this, then, one of the most solemn moments of his existence, when his character was at stake, when life and death were trembling in the balance, Jesus, fully aware of the meaning attached by his judges to the expression, claimed to be the Son of God. He heard, and heard without explanation or remonstrance, sentence of death passed upon him, for no other reason whatever but his making that claim. On any other supposition than that of his

having been really that which his judges regarded him as asserting that he was; on any other supposition than that of his true and proper Divinity, this passage of the Redeemer's life becomes worse than unmeaning in our eyes. There would be something more here than the needless flinging away of a life, by the absence of all attempt to remove the misconception (if misconception it had been), upon which the death-sentence had been based. If only a man, if not the co-eternal, co-equal Son of the Father, in speaking of himself as he did before that Jewish Council, Jesus was guilty of an extent, an audacity, an effrontery of pretension, which the blindest, wildest, most arrogant religious enthusiast has never exceeded. The only way to free his character as a man from the stain of such egregious vanity and presumption, is to recognise him as the Son of the Highest. If the Divinity that was in him be denied, the humanity no longer stands stainless.

But we believe in both, and see both manifested in the very scene that is here before our eyes. Now, with the eye of sense we look on Jesus as

he stands before this Jewish tribunal. It is the Man of sorrows, despised and rejected of men; treated by those lordly judges, and the brutal band of servitors, as the vilest of felons, the very refuse of the earth. Again, with the eye of faith we look on him, and he seems as if transfigured before us, when, breaking the long-kept silence, he declares, "I am the Son of God, and hereafter ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven." From what a depth of earthly degradation, to what a height of superhuman dignity does Jesus at once ascend! And is it not striking to notice how he himself blends his humiliation and exaltation, his humanity and divinity, as he takes to himself the double title, and binds it to his suffering brow: *The Son of man; The Son of God.*

IV.

CHRIST'S FIRST APPEARANCE BEFORE PILATE.[1]

CHRIST'S trial before the Jewish Sanhedrim closed in his conviction and condemnation. The strange commotion on the bench, in the midst of which the sentence was pronounced, and the outbreak of brutal violence on the part of the menials in the hall, being over, there was an eager and hurried consultation as to how that sentence could most speedily be executed. Had the full power of carrying out their own sentence been in their own hands, there had been no difficulty; Jesus would have been led out instantly to execution. But Judea was now under the Roman yoke; one bond and badge of its servitude being this, that while the old Jewish courts were permitted to try and to punish minor offences, the final judgment of all capital offences was reserved

[1] Mark xv. 1; Luke xxiii. 1-4; John xviii. 28-39.

for the Roman tribunals. A Roman judge must pass the sentence, or, at least, must sign the warrant that consigned the criminal to execution. At Jerusalem, these reserved cases were brought up for adjudication at the time of the great festivals, when the Roman Procurator, who resided ordinarily at Cæsarea, visited the capital. For the last six years, Pontius Pilate had held this office in Judea, and he was now on occasion of this Passover in the city. His order, therefore, for the execution must be obtained that forenoon, or perhaps not at all. It was now the last day before the Passover on which a court of justice could be held; and if not held before six o'clock that evening,—when the Passover period began, then not for seven days thereafter. To keep Christ so long in bonds, awaiting his presentation to the Roman judge,—with an uncertainty, besides, whether Pilate would take up the case after the Passover,—were a risk too perilous to run. They had, indeed, the whole day before them, and there was time enough to get Pilate's judgment before the Passover commenced; but to keep Jesus not only bound, but bound with

the order for his crucifixion hanging over him; to keep him so for eight days to come: to keep him so till not only citizens of Jerusalem, but the inhabitants of the whole region round about, had heard all the particulars of his apprehension and condemnation,—that also were peril which must, if possible, be avoided. And it could only be avoided by getting the crucifixion over before that sun which was just about to rise had set.

Obviously there was urgent need of haste. The consultation, therefore, was a brief and a hurried one. The resolution was taken to bind Jesus once more—bind him as men condemned to death were wont to be bound—and to carry him at once to Pilate, and get from him the authority to proceed. Thither, therefore, to the official residence of the Procurator, accompanied by the whole multitude that had assembled in and around the hall of Caiaphas, Jesus is conveyed. It is a house which the Gentile has occupied and polluted; a house from which the leaven has not been cast out; a house to cross whose threshold at such a time as this,—on the very eve of the Passover,—was to disqualify the

entrant from all participation in the holy rite. And, though there be among their number those who, from their position and previous acquaintance, might well have claimed the privilege of access, and asked a private audience of Pilate, to explain to him the nature of the case in which his interference at such an unseasonable hour was required, yet will not one of these precise, punctilious chief priests, scribes, and councillors venture into that dwelling, lest they should be defiled. They send in their message by some of Pilate's officers or servants. At once, with Roman courtesy, he comes out to them—to where they are all standing around the bound and sentenced Jesus. The glance of a quick eye at once revealed to Pilate the general object of this early visit. These, he knew, as his eye ran round the leaders of the crowd, were the Jewish judges, and this, as that eye rested upon Jesus, some one whom they were anxious to get punished. But why all this haste? What can it have been that has brought together, at such an unusual hour, all these city magnates, and drawn them as suppliants to his door? What extraordinary crime can this

man, whom they have borne to him, have committed, that they are so impatient to see him punished? He looks at Christ again. He had tried many; he had condemned many; his practised eye was familiar with the features which great guilt ordinarily wears, but he had never seen a great criminal look as this man looks; nothing here either of that sunk and hollow aspect that those convicted of great crimes sometimes show; nothing here of that bold and brazen front with which they still more frequently are wont to face their doom: he looks so gentle, so meek, so innocent, yet so calm, so self-possessed, so dignified. It does not seem that Pilate knew at first who this bound one was that now stood before him. He must have heard something, perhaps much, of Jesus of Nazareth before. He had been governor of the country all through the years of our Lord's public ministry, and it could scarcely be but that some report of his great sayings and doings must have reached his ear; but no more, perhaps, than Herod had he ever met him — ever seen him face to face; nor does he yet know that this

is he. He only knows and feels that never has his eye rested upon one more unlike a hardened reprobate than this. His curiosity roused, his interest excited, the favourable impression which this first sight of the accused has made, co-operating with the instinctive and official sense of justice, Pilate's first words to these judges and heads of the Jewish people are, "What accusation bring ye against this man?" Was that question put in such a way, was it spoken in such a tone, or accompanied by such a look as to convey the idea that he who put it was not at once ready to believe that any very heinous offence had been committed by that man? Perhaps it did carry with it some indication of that kind. But whether so or not, it indicated this, that Pilate meant to open up or re-try the case, or, at least, to get at and go over, upon his own account, the ground of their condemnation ere he ratified it. He could not but know—if he had not been distinctly told by the messengers whom the Jews sent to him, he saw it plainly enough in all the attendant circumstances—what it was that these

Jews were expecting him to do. But he will do it in his own way. He will not sign off-hand, upon their credit and at their bidding, the death-warrant of a man like this. Had he been a judge of the purest and strictest honour, he would not have signed in such a hurried way the death-warrant of any one; but we know it from other sources, and the Jews who stood before him knew it too, that he was not such a judge, that he had often condemned without a hearing. And it is this which inclines us to believe that there was something in the very first impression that our Lord's appearance made upon Pilate which touched the better part of his nature, and not only stirred within his heart the wish to know what it was of which they accused such a man, but also the desire to ascertain, for his own satisfaction, whether or not that accusation was well founded.

Obviously, to the men to whom it was addressed, Pilate's question was a disappointing one. They did not want, they had not expected, to be summoned thus to adduce and to substantiate some charge against Jesus, which,

in Pilate's judgment; might be sufficient to doom him to death. They had hoped that to save himself the trouble of investigation, and in compliment to them at this Passover season—a compliment which, when it cost him nothing, they knew that he was quite willing to pay—he would take their judgment on trust and proceed upon it. And they still hope so. They will let Pilate know how good a right they have to expect this service at his hand; how much they will be offended if he refuse it. When the question, then, is put to them, "What accusation bring ye against this man?" they content themselves with saying, "If he were not a malefactor, we would not have delivered him up to thee,"—words of haughtiness and injured pride. 'Do you think that we, the whole assembled Sanhedrim; we, the very first men in this Jewish community over which you happen to have been placed; we, who have come to you, as we are not often wont to do, and are here before your gates to ask a very easy act of compliance with our will,—do you think that we would have brought this man to you, if we had not already ascertained

his guilt? Do you think that we would either have ventured to offer such an insult to you, or ourselves perpetrate such injustice?' A very high tone this to take, which they have some hope will yet carry their point for them with the weak and vacillating governor. They are disappointed. They have stirred a pride that is equal to their own. If those Jews won't tell him what kind or degree of criminality it is that they attribute to this man, he, Pilate, won't put himself as a blind tool into their hands. 'If it be your judgment, and your judgment alone, that is to rule this man's case, "Take ye him, then," said Pilate, "and judge him according to your own law;"'—a refusal on Pilate's part to do the thing which they first hoped that they might get him to do off-hand; a refusal to countersign their sentence, whatever it was, and by whatever evidence supported. It was as much as saying, that so far as he had yet heard or known anything of this case, it was one which their own law, as administered by themselves, was quite competent to deal with.

Let them take this man, and judge him and

punish him as they pleased, provided only that they kept strictly within the limits that their conquerors had laid down.—This were wholly to miss their mark. Their tone changes; their pride humbles itself. They are obliged to explain to the Governor, what he had known well enough from the first, but what they had not been candid enough to tell him, that it was a sentence unto death which they wished to get executed, a sentence which they were not at liberty to carry out. This determination of Pilate to make personal inquiry into the grounds of that sentence, obliged them also to lodge some distinct and specific charge against Jesus;—one of such a kind that the Governor would be forced to deal with it; one too of sufficient magnitude to draw down upon it the punishment of death. Now mark the deep hypocrisy and utter falseness of these men. It won't do now to say that it was solely as a blasphemer, as calling himself the Son of God, that Jesus had been condemned before their bar. It won't do to let Pilate know anything of the only piece of evidence upon which their sentence has been founded. What cares he about

that kind of blasphemy of which Jesus has been convicted; what cares that Roman law, of which he is the administrator, who or what any man thinks himself to be, or claims to be, in his relationship with God? Let any Jew be but a good and faithful subject to Cæsar, and, so far as Cæsar or Cæsar's representatives are concerned, he may claim any rank he pleases among the gods. It was necessary, therefore, to draw the thickest veil of concealment over their own procedure as judges, although before the examination at this new bar was over, it oozed out that Jesus had made himself the Son of God,—with what strange effect upon Pilate's mind we shall presently see. But, in the first instance, some civil or political offence, some crime against the common law of the land, must be sought for to charge against Jesus. It was not easy to find or fabricate such a crime. Our Saviour had throughout most carefully and cautiously avoided everything like interference or intermeddling with, condemning or resisting, the ordinary administration of law, the policy and procedure of the government. He refused to entertain a question about the

rights of inheritance between two brothers, saying to him who sought his interference, "Man, who made me a judge or a ruler over you?" These very men, who are now about to frame their first accusation of him before Pilate, had tried to get him to pass his judgment upon the abstract question as to whether it was lawful to pay tribute to Cæsar or not, and had failed in their attempt to entangle him. What concealment, then, what deception, what effrontery of falsehood in it,—and it shows to what extremity they were driven,—that when forced to adduce some specific accusation, they said, "We found this fellow perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Cæsar, saying that he himself is Christ a King!" They here bring three different accusations against him, not one of which —in that sense in which alone they desire that Pilate should understand them—they know is true; and one of which, the second, they know is absolutely, and in every sense of it, false. But it suits their object to represent the accused to Pilate, as stirring up sedition, refusing to pay custom, denying the Roman right to reign over

Judea, claiming to be king of the country, in his own person and of his own right. These, however, were charges which they knew that a Roman governor, whose chief business in their country was to see that the rights of the Emperor whom he represented should suffer no damage, could not pass by; charges by no means unlikely to be true, for Judea was at this time in a most unsettled state. There were multitudes of Jews who questioned Cæsar's right to tax them; multitudes who regarded him as a foreign usurper. Give them but a chance of success, and the great majority of the people would have risen then, as they rose afterwards, and risked their lives to regain their national liberties. One thing alone was suspicious—that such an accusation should come from such a quarter; that those leaders of the Jews should be so very eager to get a man punished for such a crime. It surely could not be so mighty an offence in their eyes. They were not themselves so very loyal to Rome as to be anxious to see an enemy to the Roman power cut off. Never before, at least, had they displayed any great zeal

in that direction. Pilate had no faith in their sincerity. He saw through their designs. Perhaps it was now that, for the first time, he recognised that it was with Jesus of Nazareth, of whom he had heard so much, that he had to do. He did not entertain, because he did not believe, the charge of his being a seditious and rebellious subject. But there was one part of the accusation which was quite new to him, which sounded ridiculous in his ears, that this poor Nazarene should say that he was a king, the king of the Jews,—a very preposterous pretension; one sufficient of itself, if there was any real ground for saying that it ever had actually been set forth, to suggest a doubt as to whether Jesus was a fit subject for any judicial procedure whatever being taken against him. Overlooking all else that had been said against him, Pilate turns to Christ, and says to him, "Art thou the king of the Jews?" He expected nothing else than to get an immediate disclaimer of the absurd pretension. To his surprise, however, Jesus calmly and deliberately replies, "Thou sayest it,—I am the king of the Jews." Very curious this, to

hear such a man, in such a condition, and in such circumstances, speak in such a way. He must be some egregious, designing, perhaps dangerous impostor, or, more likely, some wretched, ignorant, half-mad enthusiast or fanatic. He would like to search a little into the matter, and find out how it really stood. The man himself would in all likelihood be the first to supply the clue; he had so willingly and so calmly answered that first question that he would answer others. But it would be better to interrogate him alone, away from these accusers. He might not be so ready to answer further questions in their hearing, or they might interfere and prevent Pilate prosecuting the inquiry in his own way. He retires, therefore, to his own dwelling, into that part of it called and used generally as the Judgment Hall, and calls upon Christ to follow him. Jesus at once consents. *He* makes no scruple about crossing that threshold: *he* fears no contagion from contact with the Gentile; his passover has been already held. And now, when they are alone, out of sight and out of hearing of those Jews, Pilate says again to him in a sub-

dued and under-tone, as of one really anxious to get at the truth, "Art thou the King of the Jews?" Waiving in the meantime anything like a direct reply, Jesus said to him, "Sayest thou this thing of thyself, or did others tell it thee of me?" 'Art thou but repeating the words of others, or art thou asking out of the depths of thine own inquiring spirit? Hast thou, too, Pilate, felt the inward need of some one to be the Governor and Lord of thine unruled, unruly spirit? Lies there behind the outward form and meaning of that question of thine, the indistinct, the inarticulate longing after another king and another kingdom than either Jews or Romans own?' Was there indeed, for one passing moment, far down in the depths of Pilate's struggling thoughts, an element of this kind at work; and did Jesus, knowing that it was there, try thus to bring it up, that he might proceed to satisfy it? If so, what a moment of transcendent interest to the Roman judge, of which, had he but known how to take advantage, he too might have entered the kingdom, and shared its securities and blessed-

ness! But he does not, he will not stoop to acknowledge, what we suspect was true, that there did mingle in the thoughts and feelings of that moment some element of the kind described. This is too personal, too bold, too home a question of the Nazarene. The pride of the Roman, the judge, swells up within his breast, overbearing his eternal interests as a man, a sinner—and so he haughtily replies: "Am I a Jew? Thine own nation, and the chief priests, have delivered thee unto me: what hast thou done?" The chance of reaching the individual conscience of this man has passed away; the trial has been made, and it has failed; Jesus must take up the question not as one between him and Pilate—between Pilate's conscience and Pilate's God,—but as one simply between himself as a sentenced criminal, and those Jews without, who are his accusers. He will not answer the last question of the Governor, "What hast thou done?"—upon that he will not enter; it would be of no avail; but he will satisfy Pilate upon one point. He will convince him that he has committed no political offence; that he never meant to set

himself in opposition to any of this world's governments. "My kingdom," said he, "is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence:" a kingdom rising up and extending itself, by earthly weapons, by outward force of any kind,—not such is that kingdom which I Jesus call my own.

But if not, what kind of kingdom can it be? what kind of king is he who rules it? So far satisfied, yet still wondering and perplexed, Pilate puts his question, not in its first specific form, but in a more general one: "Art thou a king then?" 'If not a king, like our own Cæsars or your own Herods, if not a king to fight with rival sovereigns, or ask thy subjects to fight for thee, then in what sense a king?' Our Lord's reply, we can perceive, was particularly adapted to the position, character, acquirements, experience, of him before whom he stood —a Roman official of high rank, educated, cultivated; a man of affairs, of large experience of men—men in different countries and of different

creeds; not given much, perhaps, to any deep or serious thought about religious matters, yet sufficiently acquainted with the rival schools of philosophy and religion by which the then great living Roman commonwealth was divided and distracted. Truth, moral truth, religious truth, was the one proclaimed object of research, of which some were saying, Lo, here it is, and others, Lo, there it is; but of which he, Pilate, in pursuit of quite a different object, had learned to think that neither here nor there nor anywhere was it to be found. It is to this man that Jesus says, speaking in the language that would be most intelligible to him: "Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice." As these words fell upon the ear of Pilate, one can well enough imagine that the current of his thoughts ran thus:—'It is even as I suspected; here is another of these pretenders, who each would have us to believe that he alone had discovered the undiscoverable, that he alone had found out and got exclusive pos-

session of *the truth;* here is a new Jewish rival of those old Stoics of our own, who were ever teaching us that every wise man was a king,—the setter up of a new system, which he imagines is to dethrone every other one that the world before has seen, whose fancy is that he himself is already upon the throne of his great kingdom,—some poor egotistical, yet quite harmless enthusiast, whose day-dream who would wish to break! One thing, at least, is clear enough, that it is a quite empty, hollow charge these Jews are urging here against him. He may sit as long as he likes upon that ideal throne of his, without the throne of Tiberius being endangered; he may get as many subjects as he can to enter that ideal kingdom of his, and my master, the Emperor, have not a loyal subject the less.' And so with that passing question to Jesus, "What is truth?"—a question he does not stay to get answered, as he has no faith that any answer to it can be given; a question not uttered sneeringly or scoffingly, but rather sadly and bitterly, so far as he himself is concerned, having come to regard all truth as a

phantom; and with a kindly, tolerant, half-pitying, half-envious feeling towards Jesus, — with that question put to Jesus by the way, Pilate goes out to the Jews, and says to them boldly and emphatically, "I find in him no fault at all;" —the faultlessness of Christ acknowledged, his kingly claims scarcely comprehended, and so far as comprehended, rejected, perhaps despised.

Let each of us now ask himself, How stands it as to me and this kingdom of the truth, this one great King of the true? Is Jesus Christ to me the way, the truth, the life? Does truth, simple, pure, eternal truth, stand expressed and exhibited to me in those words, those prayers, those acts, those sufferings, that life, that death, of Jesus Christ? The witness that he bore to the truth, in the living of that life and the dying of that death,—have I listened to it, and believed in it, and submitted to it? Am I of the truth; a simple, humble, earnest seeker after it; and have I this evidence of my being so, that I hear the voice of Jesus, hear it and hail it, among all the conflicting voices that are falling on my ear, as the voice of him who rightfully claims the lordship

of my soul? Is truth—the truth as to God, my Creator, my Father, my Redeemer; the truth as to myself, what I am, what I ought to be, what I may be, what I shall be,—is this truth not a mere form of sound words, not a mere congeries of acknowledged or accepted propositions; but does it stand before me embodied in the person, the life, the death, the mediation of Jesus Christ; and have I enshrined and enthroned him as King and Lord of my weak, my sinful, my immortal spirit?

V.

CHRIST'S APPEARANCE BEFORE HEROD.[1]

JESUS had spoken quite frankly and openly to Pilate when they were together, out of sight and hearing of the Jews, alone in the Judgment Hall. It was quite different when, accompanied by Christ, Pilate came out again to the attendant crowd, and boldly said to them, "I find no fault in this man." So far, then, the Chief Priests and Elders have failed. Failure always embitters. Failure here was what these men were by no means disposed to submit to. Pilate's assertion of his belief in the innocence of Jesus only made them the more vehement in their assertion of his guilt. They became the more fierce. They accused him, Mark tells us, of many things. But the waves and the billows of this swelling

[1] Matthew xxvii. 12, 13; Mark vi. 14-16; Luke ix. 7-9; xiii. 31, 32; xxiii. 4-12.

wrath of theirs broke harmlessly upon Christ. So absent, so unmoved, so indifferent did he appear, that it seemed as if he had not heard what they were saying against him, or hearing had not understood, or understanding had not heeded. Very different his retirement into himself,—this unruffled composure, this unbroken silence, from those eager and animated utterances to which the Governor had just been listening in the hall within. Perhaps it is wounded pride that seals the lips of Jesus. To men like these, animated by such a bitter personal hostility to him, exhausting every epithet of vituperation, heaping upon him all kinds of charges, Jesus may not condescend to give any answer. But he has not treated, will not treat, the Roman governor in the same way; at least he will surely tell him why it is that he preserves this silence. Pilate says to him, "Hearest thou not how many things they witness against thee?" There is no reply. The lips are as shut at the question of Pilate as at the accusation of the Jews. Christ has said all that he meant to say, done all that he meant to do, so far as those charges were concerned that they were

now bringing against him. He had answered to the Roman judge that the kingship which he claimed was not of a kind in any way to interfere with this world's governments; he had satisfied him of his perfect innocence as a subject of the State; and, having done that, he would say and do no more.

One observes an almost exact parallel as to his silences and his speakings in our Lord's conduct before the Jewish and the Gentile courts of justice. In that preliminary unofficial conversation he held with Annas before the Sanhedrim sat in judgment on his case, Jesus had spoken without reserve, had answered the High Priest's questions but too fully, and had brought down upon himself the stroke of the officer who stood by. But when the regular trial commenced, and charges were formally brought forward, and attempted by many witnesses to be substantiated, Jesus held his peace, so long and so resolutely, manifesting so little disposition or desire to meddle in any way with the procedure that was going on, that the High Priest rose from his seat, and put to him a question of the same

import with that which Pilate afterwards put; and the two questions met with the very same treatment,—to neither of them a single word of reply was given. But when the High Priest rose, and solemnly adjured Jesus to tell whether he was the Christ the Son of God, just as when Pilate asked whether he was the King of the Jews, and what kind of king he was, our Lord made instant and distinct reply. So far as we can see or understand the principle ruling here the Saviour's conduct, determining the time to speak and the time to be silent, it was this: that when the matter immediately and directly concerns his Divine Sonship and Kingship, he will help his judges in every way he can; nay, he will himself supply the evidence they want. Upon that count he will allow himself to be condemned; he will co-operate with his enemies in bringing about his condemnation; but of all these other lesser charges he will take no account; but leave the manifold attempts to fasten on him any other kind of charge, to break down of themselves, that, his enemies themselves being witnesses, it might be solely and alone as the Son of

God, the King of Israel, that he should be convicted, condemned, and crucified.

Among the many things that the Chief Priests were now accusing Jesus of in the presence of the Governor, hoping still to convince Pilate that he was not the guiltless man that he had taken him to be, there was one thing that they put prominently forward, presented in every form, amplified in every way, on which they mainly relied in their dealings with Pilate,—the setting forth of Christ as a ringleader of sedition. "He stirreth up the people," stirreth them up against the constituted authorities, preaching rebellion through the whole country, not here in Judea alone, but there also in Galilee where he began this work. This allusion to Galilee as the birthplace of the alleged seditious movement may have been accidental; they may have meant merely thereby to signify how widespread the evil had been which they were calling upon Pilate to check; or it may have been done designedly, with that art which was to leave nothing unsaid or unsuggested, by which the Governor could possibly be influenced. Galilee might have been named by

them, to suggest to Pilate how difficult it was to produce proof of crime committed in so remote a district; or to remind him that this Galilee, upon which so much of Christ's time and labour had been spent, was the chosen haunt of the resisters of the Roman authority, the cradle of most of the seditious plots concocted against the Emperor's government; or they might have known of the bad feeling that there was at this time between Pilate and the King of Galilee, and might have imagined that it would be rather gratifying to Pilate than otherwise to lay his hand judicially upon one who might be regarded as a subject of that prince.

However it was, no sooner had the words escaped their lips, than a happy thought suggests itself to Pilate. He is in great difficulty with this case; he knows not how to deal with it. He had never been so importuned as he now was by those Chief Priests and elders; he never saw them more bent on anything than on the death of this man whom they had brought to him; it would be easy to give him up to their vengeance —he had done as much as that before!—but he

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was convinced of this man's innocence; there was something too, so peculiar about his whole look, bearing, and conduct, that he could not make up his mind to have any share in sending him to be executed as a common criminal. But now he hears, that part at least, perhaps the greater part of the offence alleged against him had taken place in Galilee, in that part of the country which was not under his jurisdiction, but belonged to that of Herod. This Herod, the King of Galilee, happened at this very time to be in Jerusalem. Pilate will send the case to him; and thus get the responsibility of deciding it shifted from his own shoulders, by laying it upon one who not only may be quite willing to assume it, but may regard as a compliment the reference of the case to his adjudication. There was a misunderstanding between the two—the Roman Procurator and the Galilean king—which the sending of Jesus to the latter for trial might serve to heal. Pilate had done something to displease Herod,—something, in all likelihood, in the very way of interfering with what Herod regarded as his rights, and the rights of his sub-

jects. Some Galileans had been up lately at Jerusalem, offering sacrifice there. There had been a riot, which Pilate had promptly and summarily quelled; but in doing so he had mingled the blood of some of these Galileans with their sacrifices — cut them down without inquiring whose subjects they were, or what right they might have to demand a trial in one or other of the Herodian courts. For this, or some such fancied interference with his jurisdiction, Herod had taken offence at Pilate. The recognition of his jurisdiction, then, by sending to him for trial such a notorious person as Jesus, would be the very kind of compliment most soothing to his kingly vanity. Herod recognised and appreciated the compliment; and whatever else Pilate lost by the line of conduct he pursued that day, he at least gained this—he got the quarrel between himself and Herod healed.

The happy thought no sooner occurs to Pilate than he acts upon it. And now, guarded by some Roman soldiers, accompanied by the whole crowd of his accusers, Jesus is despatched to Herod. To enter into the scene that follows, we

must go back a little upon this Herod's history. How John the Baptist and he became first acquainted we are not told. A part of the territory (Peræa) over which Herod's jurisdiction extended, ran down along the eastern shore of the Dead Sea, and it is probable that it was in some of the circuits that he made of this district that he first fell in with the Baptist, engaged in his great ministry of repentance. Herod was greatly struck alike with the man and with his teaching. There was a strange fascination about both which drew the attention of the King. As there was nothing about John's ministry to excite or gratify either the intellect or the fancy,—no miracles wrought, no new doctrines propounded, no vivid picturing employed; as all was so purely moral, so plain, so pointed, so practical in his teaching, we must believe that what at first drew Herod to John, and made him listen with such pleasure, was that it was a faithful portraiture of men that John was drawing, an honest and fearless exposure of their sins he made. Herod both admired and approved; but the pleasure that he had in observing John, and in listening to his in-

struction, was by no means a pure or untroubled one. He feared John, we are told, knowing that he was a just man and a holy. This fear was the fruit of guilt. He knew and felt what a different man John was from himself. The very presence of the Baptist was a rebuke, and he was not yet so hardened as to receive that rebuke without alarm. Nor did this first connexion of the King with the Baptist terminate in the mere excitement of certain emotions, whether of respect, or admiration, or fear. Herod did many things, we are told, at John's bidding. I imagine that, in the first stage of their intercourse, John dealt with Herod as he dealt with the Pharisees, and the soldiers, and the publicans; that he laid his hand upon those open and patent offences of which, in common with other rulers, Herod notoriously was guilty. The King not only suffered him to do so, but even went the length of reforming his conduct in some respects, in obedience to the Baptist's instructions. But John did not stop there—did not stop where Herod would have liked; but, stepping boldly into the inner circle of his private life, and laying his

hand upon the stain which disfigured it, he said to him, "It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife."

In all likelihood Herodias was not with Herod when first he met the Baptist, and heard him so gladly, and did many things at his bidding. This meeting may have happened in the wilderness, where Herod ranked but as one of John's large and public audience. But the King invited the Baptist to his court, and it was there, perhaps in presence of Herodias, that the rebuke of that particular transgression was given. Herod's anger was kindled at what appeared an impertinent and officious intermeddling with his private conduct, his family affairs. And there was one beside him who resented that intermeddling still more than he, and was at pains to excite and to nurse his wrath. Herodias would have made short work of it with this sharp reprover; she would have sealed his lips at once in death, so that she should no more be troubled with their unwelcome rebukes; and Herod, notwithstanding all his earlier readiness to hear and to obey, notwithstanding all his respect and regard for John, would have

yielded to her desire; but he feared the multitude, and, yielding to that fear, he made a compromise—he cast John into prison, and kept him there for months. But months could not quench the thirst for his blood that had been stirred in the heart of that second Jezebel; still she was asking for the head of the Baptist, but Herod would not yield—and took no little credit to himself, we may believe, for being so firm. Forgetting that it was the fear of the multitude that overbalanced the influence of the Queen, he might even have come to persuade himself that he was dealing very gently and tenderly with the Baptist. But the Queen knew him better than he knew himself, and so with diabolic art contrived the plot that was to bring another and still weightier fear, to overbalance in its turn the fear of the multitude.

All went as she desired. The evening for the royal supper came; the chief men of Galilee, with the King in high good-humour at their head, sat down at the banqueting-table. Salome entered, and danced before them; the guests, heated with wine, broke out into rapturous ap-

plause. In a transport of delight, the King made the fatal promise, and confirmed it with an oath, that he would give her whatsoever she should ask. Salome went out to consult her mother as to what her request should be. There was little time spent in deliberation. The Queen's reply was all ready, for she had conjectured what would occur, and so Mark tells, Salome came in straightway unto the King, and said, Give me here John the Baptist's head upon a charger. The King was taken in the snare; no time for thought was given, no way of escape left open. There was the oath which he had taken; there were the witnesses of that oath around the board. He could not break his oath without standing dishonoured before those witnesses. The fear of the multitude is overborne by a still higher fear. He gives the order, and the deed is done. Unhappy man! entangled, betrayed by his own rash vow; his very sense of honour turned into the instrument that makes him a murderer! Herod was exceeding sorry; he knew well how wrong a thing it was that he was doing; it was with bitter self-reproach that the order for the execution was

given. For a short time there were the stings of remorse, but these soon lost their power. John was beheaded, and no manifestation of popular displeasure made. John was beheaded; Herodias and Salome were satisfied, and Herod must have felt it a kind of relief to know that, as to him, he should be troubled by them no more. Remorse died out, but a strange kind of superstitious fear haunted Herod's spirit. Reports are brought to him of another strange teacher who has arisen, and to whom all men are now flocking, as they had flocked to the Baptist at the first. And Herod says, "John have I beheaded, but who is this of whom I hear such things?"

What perplexed him was, that it was said by some that John was risen from the dead, by some that Elias had appeared, by others that one of the old prophets had arisen. Herod hesitated for a time which of these suppositions he should adopt; but at last he decided, and said to his servants, "This is John the Baptist; he is risen from the dead, and therefore mighty works do show forth themselves in him." He desired to see him; a desire in which there mingled at first so much

of awe and dread, that he rather shunned than courted an interview; so much so, that when Christ came afterwards into Galilee, and there was some prospect they might meet, he had in a very artful way, by working on Christ's fears, persuaded him to withdraw from that part of the country. He sent some Pharisees, who said to Jesus, "Get thee out, and depart hence, for Herod will kill thee." Herod never could have really meditated such a deed. We know that afterwards when it was in his power, he declined taking any part in the condemnation and crucifixion of Jesus. It was a cunning device to get Herod out of the embarrassments in which he found that Christ's residence and teaching within his territory might involve him. And so Jesus seems to have dealt with it, when he said to the Pharisees, whom he at once recognised as the agents of the King, "Go," said he, "and tell that fox, Behold, I cast out devils, and I do cures to-day and to-morrow, and the third day I shall be perfected,"—'my times and places for working and for finishing my work, are all definitely arranged, and that quite independently of any stratagem of this cunning king.

At last, at an unexpected time and place, and in an unexpected way, Jesus is presented to him by Pilate; presented as a criminal at the bar, with whom he may use the greatest freedom, as one who will surely be anxious to say and do all he can in order to obtain his release. Herod, therefore, when he sees Jesus thus placed before him, is exceedingly glad,—he had heard so much about him, had desired so long to see him. But now, as indicating at once the state of mind and heart into which worldliness and levity and licentiousness have sunk this man, and as supplying to us the key that explains our Lord's singular conduct to him, let us particularly notice, that in the gladness which Herod feels in having the desire to see Christ thus gratified, there mingles no wish to be instructed, no alarm of a guilty conscience, no dread of meeting another Baptist to rebuke him for his iniquities. He has got over whatever compunction he may at one time have felt. He has quenched the risings of remorse within his heart. He has come to be once more on such good terms with himself; so much at ease, that when he looks at Jesus, it is with no

disturbing remembrances of that bloody head once brought to him upon the charger,—no shrinking dread that he may see again the Baptist's form, and hear again the Baptist's voice. It is with an eager, idle, prurient curiosity — having a tinge, perhaps, of superstitious wonder in it, that he looks upon Jesus, and proceeds to question him. As compared with John, this new teacher had been distinguished by the working of miracles. And if he wrought them to save others, surely he will do so to save himself. Herod tries in every way he can think of, to induce him to work some wonder in his presence. How does Jesus act when addressed and treated thus by such a man? Shall it be as if the Baptist had indeed risen from the dead? Will Jesus seize upon the opportunity now given, to take up, reiterate, and redouble upon the profligate prince the rebuke of his great forerunner? Shall Herod hear it said to him now, in tones more piercing than ever John employed, It was not lawful for thee to take the Baptist's life? Not thus does Jesus act. Herod puts question after question to him. Jesus looks at him, but opens not his lips. Herod asks and

asks again, that some sign may be shown, some token of his alleged power exhibited. Jesus never lifts a finger, makes not a single movement to comply. Herod is the only one of all his judges whom Jesus deals with in this way,—the only one before whom, however spoken to, he preserves a continuous and unbroken silence. It does not appear that, from the time when he was presented to Herod, to the time when he was sent away from him, a single word ever passed the Saviour's lips.

That deep and death-like silence, the silence of those lips which opened with such pliant readiness when any word of gentle entreaty or hopeful warning was to be spoken, how shall we interpret it? Was it indignation that sealed those lips? Would Christ hold no intercourse with the man who had dipped his hands in such blood as that of the Baptist? Did he mean to mark off Herod as the one and only man so deeply stained with guilt that he will not stoop to exchange with him a single word? It had been human this, but not divine; and it is a divine meaning that we must look for in this

dread and awful silence. There lived not, there breathed not upon the earth the man, however steeped in guilt, from whom that loving Saviour would have turned away, had but the slightest sign of penitence been shown, the slightest symptom of a readiness to listen and be saved. It was no bygone act of Herod's life that drew down upon him the doom of that silence—though doom it little seemed to him to be; it was the temper and the spirit of the man as he stood there before the Lord, after all that he had passed through; it was that which did it. Why, the very sight of Jesus, connected, as he knew or fancied him to be in some mysterious way with John, should have been to Herod as though one risen from the dead had actually appeared in his presence. It was he, not Jesus, that should have been speechless when they met; or, if he spake at all, it should have been to ask whether, in that world of spirits from which Christ came, there was mercy for a sinner such as he. But, instead of this, instead of anything like this, instead of deep or earnest or anxious feeling of any kind, there is nothing but a vain-glorious wish to have

some talk with this strange man, with whose name and fame all the country has been ringing, the cravings of an empty curiosity, the thirst for some showy exhibition of knowledge or of power. Let not that man think that he shall hear anything of the Lord. Christ could have spoken such a word as Herod never would have liked to hear again; he could have wrought such a miracle as would have turned the curiosity of the King into terror, his pride into abasement. But he is now to reap the fruit of his own doings, and that fruit is even this, that he is left unspoken to by the Lord from heaven. This silence, had he but interpreted it aright, was perhaps the very thing most fitted to speak home to his conscience and his heart. But he did not understand it, did not enter into the reason of it, never thought of his own past conduct, his own present character, as the cause of it; it stirred him to no inquiry, it awakened in him no remorse. The only feeling that it appears to have produced was irritation; the irritation of mortified vanity. Greatly galled, yet in no way softened, when he could make nothing of this mysterious

man who mantled himself in such obstinate silence, he and his men of war found nothing else to do than to set Christ at naught, and mock him, and array him in a white robe, and send him back to Pilate.

A wonderful instance this of the onward, downward course of crime, particularly of that peculiar course of crime, levity, and licentiousness, which Herod had pursued; an instance how speedily and how thoroughly a human heart may harden itself against reproof, quench its convictions, get over its fears, and bring down upon itself that doom, than which there is none more awful,—Ephraim is joined to his idols; let him alone. To be left utterly and absolutely alone; to have all the voices that speak to us of God and duty, the voice of conscience from within, the voice of providence from without, the voice which comes from the lips of Jesus,—to have all these voices hushed, hushed into an unbroken, perhaps eternal stillness; can one conceive any condition of a human spirit sadder or more awful? Yet this is the very condition to which the abuse of opportunity, the indulgence of passion, the drowning

of the voices when they do speak to us, is naturally and continually tending.

My young friends, let me entreat you especially to take a double warning from such a case as this:—1st, Beware how you deal with your first religious convictions; tremble for yourselves if you find them dying by a slow death, as the withering, hardening spirit of worldliness creeps in upon your soul, or perishing suddenly amid the consuming fires of some burning passion. They tell us that there is no ice so close and hard as that which forms upon the surface which once was thawed; and there is no hardness of the human spirit so great as that which forms over hearts that once had melted. And, 2d, Beware of hot fits of enthusiasm, in which you go farther in profession than you are prepared to go in steady and sustained practice. Herod went too far at first, and got himself involved among obligations and restraints from which, when the hour of temptation came, he flung himself free by an effort which damaged his moral and spiritual nature more than it had ever been damaged before; his revulsions from religion all the greater

on account of the temporary and partial, but hollow and merely emotional entertainment that he had given to its claims. What you do, do it with all your heart; for it is good to be zealously affected in a good thing; but do it intelligently, calmly, deliberately, as those who know and feel that it is the greatest of all transactions that you engage in, when it is with God and for your soul's eternal welfare that you transact.

VI.

CHRIST'S SECOND APPEARANCE BEFORE PILATE.[1]

"THIS child," said good old Simeon, as he took up the infant Jesus into his arms to bless him—"this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel; and for a sign that shall be spoken against; that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed." Never were those words more strikingly fulfilled than in these closing scenes of the Saviour's life which we are now engaged in tracing. Then many fell,—those forsaking, despairing disciples of Jesus,—but fell to rise again; then was that sign set up, against which so many shafts of so many kinds were launched; and then were the thoughts of many hearts revealed—among others those of Judas, and Peter, and Caiaphas, and Herod, and Pilate

[1] Luke xxiii. 13-16; Matthew xxvii. 15-23; Luke xxiii. 20-23; Matthew xxvii. 26-30; John xix. 1-16.

—revealed by the very closeness of their contact with Christ, by the peculiarity of those relationships to him into which they were then thrown. Last Sunday our attention was concentrated upon Herod; to-day let us fix our eyes on Pilate, and, taking him up at that stage where we left him, let us try to understand and to follow the working of his thoughts and feelings during those two hours of their earthly lives in which he and Jesus had to do with one another—he in the character of judge, Jesus in the character of one accused and condemned by the Sanhedrim.

You will remember that when first he heard, among the other accusations which the High Priests lodged against him, that Jesus had said that he himself was Christ a King,—struck at once with the singularity of the pretension, and with the appearance of the man who made it, Pilate called on Christ to follow him into the inner hall of his residence; that there, when alone with him, omitting all reference to any other charge, he asked him particularly about this one; that Christ fully satisfied him as to

there being nothing politically dangerous or offensive in the claim to a kingdom which he had put forth; that, bringing Christ out along with him to the Jews, he said at once and decidedly, "I find no fault in this man;" and that then, taking advantage of a reference to Galilee, he had sent Jesus off to Herod, to see what that Galilean king and judge might think and do. In this way he hoped to be relieved from the painful and embarrassing position in which he felt himself to be placed.

He was disappointed in this hope. Jesus was sent back to him by Herod; sent back without any judgment having been pronounced; sent back in such a way as to indicate that Herod as well as he made light of this poor Galilean's pretension to be a king,—thought it, in fact, more a matter for mockery and ridicule than for serious judicial entertainment. Although a considerable body of the High Priests and of the people had accompanied Jesus to and from the bar of Herod, yet in that interval there had been to some extent a scattering of the crowd. Pilate, therefore, called together afresh the Chief

Priests, and the rulers, and the people—the latter particularly mentioned, as Pilate had now begun to think that his best chance of gaining the end upon which his heart was set,—the deliverance of Christ out of the hands of his enemies,—would be by appealing, over the heads of their rulers, to the humanity of the common people. When all, then, were again assembled, he made a short speech to them, reiterating his own conviction of Christ's innocence, confirming it by the testimony of Herod, and closing by a proposal that he hoped would be at once accepted,—I will therefore chastise him, and release him. But why, if he were innocent, chastise him at all? Why not at once acquit the culprit, and send him away absolved from the bar of Roman judgment? It was a weak and unworthy concession, the first faltering of Pilate's footstep. He cannot but say that he has found nothing worthy of death in this man; he is himself thoroughly satisfied that there is nothing in him worthy of any punishment; but it will please his accusers, it will conciliate the people, it may open the way to their readier acquiescence

in his after dismissal, to inflict on him some punishment, a proposal not dictated by any spirit of cruelty, springing rather from the wish to protect Jesus from the greater penalty, by inflicting on him the less; yet one that weakened his position, that made those sharp-sighted Jews at once perceive that he could be moved, that he was not ready to take up and stand firmly and fixedly upon the ground of Christ's innocence. In deference to them, he has gone so far against his own convictions; he may go farther. He has yielded the inch, they may force him to yield the ell. The proposal, therefore, of chastising Jesus, and letting him go, is rejected, and rejected so as to throw Pilate back upon some other, some new device.

He recollected that at this time of the Passover it was a customary thing, in compliment to the great assembly of the Jews in their metropolis, for the Procurator to arrest in a single instance the ordinary course of justice, and to release whatever prisoner the people might ask to be given up. He recollected at the same time that there was a notable prisoner, who then lay

bound at Jerusalem, one Barabbas, who for sedition and murder had been cast into prison; and the idea occurred to Pilate that if—instead either of asking them broadly and generally who it was that they wished him to release, or whether they would let him choose for them and release Jesus—he narrowed in this instance the choice, and presented to them the alternative of taking Barabbas or Jesus, they could scarcely fail to choose the latter. To give the greater effect to this proposal, Pilate ascended the movable rostrum or judgment-seat, which stood upon the tesselated pavement that ran before the vestibule of the Palace, and addressing himself to the multitude, said to them, "Whom will ye that I release unto you? Barabbas, or Jesus who is called Christ?"

While waiting their answer, a message was brought to him, the messenger having been instructed to deliver it immediately, wherever he was, and however he might be engaged. It came from his wife; was distinct and somewhat authoritative,—"Have thou nothing to do with that just man, for I have suffered many things this

day in a dream because of him." Pilate's wife was not a Jew, nor did she mix much with the common people of the land. That she should have learned so much of Jesus as to think and speak of him as "that just man,"—that she should have been so much concerned when she heard that her husband had been asked to try him, as to take this uncommon step of sending a warning to him on the judgment-seat,—may be regarded as a proof how wide-spread and how deep the impression was that Christ had made.

The time occupied by the hearing and considering this message, — whose warning knell rung in strange harmony with the alarm that was already pealing in Pilate's spirit,—gave to the Chief Priests and the rulers the opportunity they were so quick to seize, to prompt the crowd as to the answer they should give to Pilate's proposal. We do not know what kind of stimulants were employed upon this occasion; but we all do know what a flexible, impressible, excitable a thing a city mob is, when composed, as this one mainly was, of the lowest of the people; and we

can at least easily conjecture what the firebrands were which the expert hands of the priesthood threw in among that mob, inflaming its passions to the highest pitch, and giving the burning mass into their hands, to be directed as they desired. Recovered a little from the disturbance which his wife's message cost him, Pilate turns again to the people, and says to them, "Which of the two, then, will ye that I release unto you?" They say, "Barabbas." Surprised and annoyed at the reply, almost willing to believe there has been some mistake, he puts it to them in another form: "Will ye that I release unto you the King of the Jews?" using the epithet, in the belief that they, as well as he, will look upon its claimant more as an object of pity than of condemnation. But now they leave him in no doubt as to what their will and pleasure is: "Away with this man," they all cry out at once, "and release unto us Barabbas!" "What shall I then do with Jesus, which is called Christ?" This weak and almost pitiful asking of them what he should do, ends, as all such yielding to popular prejudices, cringeing to popular passions, ever does;

it makes the multitude more confident, more imperious. The Governor has put himself into their hands, and they will make him do their will. "What shall I do, then, with Jesus?" Let him be crucified, they say. Crucified! It is the first time the word has been named in Pilate's hearing, the first time they tell him articulately what it is they desire to have done with Jesus. Crucify him!—give up to that worst and most ignominious of all deaths this meek and gentle man, who he is sure has done no wrong; whom he sees well enough that the Chief Priests seek to get rid of from some religious antipathy that they have taken against him:—can the people mean it? He had fancied, whatever the Chief Priests thought, that *they* had a different feeling towards him. "Why," in his surprise, he says to them, "what evil hath he done?" But this now excited and uproarious crowd is far past the point of answering or arguing with the Governor. Its one and only cry is, "Let him be crucified!" Twice Pilate asks them to tell him what crime he had committed, that they should doom him to a felon's

death. He gets but that cry repeated, with louder, angrier voice. Yet a third time,—clinging to the hope that he may still succeed in extricating Jesus from their grasp, without putting himself entirely wrong with them,—he puts the query, "Why, what evil hath he done?" and gathering up a little strength, as if he were determined to take his own way, and act upon the suggestion that he had thrown out a few moments before, he adds, "I have found no cause of death in him. I will therefore chastise him, and let him go." The very mention of letting him go stirs the crowd to a tenfold frenzy, and now the voices of the Chief Priests themselves are heard swelling and intensifying the cry, "Crucify him! crucify him!"

Before a storm like this who can stand? He has done—so Pilate thinks—the most he can. If he go further, he will raise another city tumult which it will cost many lives to quell, and the quelling of which by force may expose him to the very same charges of tyranny and cruelty which, upon more than one occasion of the kind before, had actually been transmitted to Rome

against him, and drawn down upon him the rebuke and displeasure of the Emperor. The yielding is but the sacrifice of a single life, which may be made without involving the Governor in any danger. But the resisting; who can tell in what that might land? Still, however, he is not at ease. He himself scarce knows the reason why; but somehow he never saw the man whose blood he would like so ill to have resting upon him as the blood of Jesus. The private interview they had together in the Hall had raised some strange misgivings in Pilate's heart. What is it about this man that has given him so strong a hold upon Pilate, and makes him struggle so hard to get him released? Pilate himself could not have told; but even now, though he has at last resolved to give him up, he will not, cannot do it without trying in some way to throw off his shoulders the responsibility of his death. "When Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing, but rather that a tumult was made, he took water and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, 'I am innocent of the blood of this just person; see ye to it.' Then answered

all the people and said, 'His blood be on us, and on our children.' And he delivered Jesus to their will."

Now, let us pause a moment here in the narrative to mark the inner workings of conscience and of humanity in the heart of Pilate. It seemed an ingenious device to give the people their choice. It was resorted to from a desire on his part to rescue Jesus. It would gain, as it first seemed to him, a double object,—it would prevent the Jews from saying that he had screened a seditious man, and yet it would rescue an innocent one from death. But to what did it amount? It proceeded on the assumption that Christ was guilty; it asked that as one righteously condemned, he might by an act of grace be released. There lay one fatal flaw in the proposition. But, still worse, it put the matter out of Pilate's hands into those of the people. It was a virtual renunciation, on Pilate's part, of the rights and prerogatives of the judge. And by thus denuding himself of his own proper official position, Pilate put himself at the mercy of a fickle and infuriated populace, and gave them that hold

and power over him which they so mercilessly employed.

This crying out—"Crucify, crucify him!" as contrasted with the hosannas that a few days before had greeted Christ's entrance into Jerusalem, has been often quoted to prove how rapid the changes in popular sentiment sometimes are, how little a multitude can be trusted. But was it the same crowd which raised the hosannas of the one day, that uttered the "Crucify him, crucify him!" of the other? I rather think that had we been present upon both occasions, and intimately acquainted with the inhabitants of Jerusalem, we should have seen that the two crowds were differently constituted; and that, however true it may be that tides of public feeling often take suddenly opposite directions, this can scarcely be quoted as an instance exactly in point.

But very curious is it to mark the expedient to which Pilate had recourse, in that public washing of his hands. He delivers Jesus up to be crucified. Therein lay his guilt; he might, and should have refused to become a party to his

crucifixion. Believing Jesus to be innocent, to give him up to death was to take a large share of the criminality upon himself. And yet he thinks that when he gets the Jews to take it upon them that he has relieved himself, if not, entirely, yet in great measure, of the responsibility. He regards himself as one coerced by others: and when these others are quite willing to take on themselves the entire weight of the deed, he imagines that this will go a great length in clearing him. And if ever, placed under strong compulsion from without, urged on to a certain course of conduct which in our conscience we disapprove, we yield, and in yielding take comfort to ourselves from others saying that they are quite ready to incur the whole responsibility of the affair, then let us remember that we are acting over again the part of Pilate; and that just as little as that outward washing of his hands did anything to clear him of the stain he was contracting, so little can we hope that the guilt contracted by our being a consenting and co-operating party in any deed of injustice or dishonour, may be thus mitigated or wiped away.

Pilate has given up Jesus to the will of the multitude; given him up to be crucified. The judge's work is done; there remains only the work of the executioner. Over that it is no part of the Procurator's office to preside. Why, then, does Pilate not withdraw? We might have thought that, wearied with his conflict with the rabble, and oppressed with painful feelings as to its issue, he would have been only too glad to retire—but he cannot; a singular fascination still binds him to the spot,—perhaps the lingering hope that he may yet succeed in rescuing the victim from his bloodthirsty enemies. He hands Christ over to his soldiers, to have that scourging inflicted which was the ordinary precursor and preliminary to crucifixion. It might not be difficult from the narratives of eye-witnesses to give you some idea of what a military scourging was, what kind of instrument they used in it, what kind of wounds that instrument made, what terrible torture was inflicted, to what length that torture was often carried; but we would rather have a veil drawn over the purely physical sufferings of our Saviour, than have them pressed

prominently upon our eye. We recoil from the attempts so often made to excite a sympathetic horror by vivid details of our Lord's bodily sufferings. We feel as if it were degrading him to present him in that character, in which so many, equal nay superior in their claims upon our sympathy, might be put beside him.

But the scourging did not satisfy the rude and brutal soldiers who had got Christ into their hands. As Romans, these men knew little, cared little about any kingship that Christ might claim. With them it could not be, as with the Jews, a subject of religious hate or scorn. It was a topic alone of ribald mirth, of Gentile mockery. This Roman cohort takes the hint that Herod's men of war had given them; who had thrown a white robe over Jesus, clothing him with something like the garment that their own kings wore, that they might set at naught his vain pretensions to be a king. And now, when the scourging is over, these Roman soldiers will outdo their Jewish comrades; they will make a more perfect pantomime of this poor Galilean's royalty. They take some old military cloak, of the same colour with

the robes of their emperors; they throw it over his bloody shoulders; they plait a crown of thorns, and put it on his head; they thrust a reed, as a mock sceptre, into his right hand; and then, when they have got him robed, and crowned, and sceptred thus, they bow the knee, and hail him as a king. But they tire even of that mock homage; the demon spirit that is in them inspires the merriment with a savage cruelty; and so, as if ashamed even of that kind of homage they had rendered, they snatch impatiently the reed out of his hand, and smite with it the crown of thorns, and drive it down upon his pierced and bleeding brow, and spit upon him, and smite him with their hands.

All this is done in an inner court or guard-room, out of sight of the crowd that is still waiting without. Pilate sees it all; makes no attempt to mitigate the suffering or the mockery; is absorbed in wonder as he gazes upon Jesus —such a picture of silent, gentle, meek, unmurmuring, uncomplaining patience!—standing there, and taking all that treatment as though no strange thing were happening, as if he had

expected all, were prepared for all, found no difficulty in submitting to all. There is no weakness in that patience; but a strength, a power, a dignity. The sight moves Pilate's heart: it would move any heart, he thinks; may it not move even the hearts of those people without? may it not satisfy their thirst for vengeance to see the suffering Jesus reduced to such a pitiable plight as this? He will try at least what the sight can do in the way of stirring such sympathy. He goes forth, with Jesus following, and says to the multitude, "Behold, I bring him forth to you, that ye may know that I find no fault in him;" then, turning and pointing to Jesus, as he stood wearing still the purple robe and the crown of thorns, bearing on his face and person the marks of all the sufferings and indignities of the guardhouse, Pilate says, "Behold the man!"—behold and pity, behold and be satisfied, —behold, and suffer me, now that I have thus chastised him, to let him go! Alas! he knew not the intensity of such fanatic hatred as that which those High Priests and rulers cherished, and had, for the time, infused into the obedient

crowd; how it quenches every impulse of kindliness in the human heart, and nerves the human hands for deeds of utmost cruelty. That sight to which he points, instead of moving any pity, only evokes fresh outbreaks of ferocious violence; with unabated breath, the same wild cry from every side salutes the ear of the Governor—"Crucify him, crucify him!" It not only disappoints, it provokes Pilate to be baffled thus again, and baffled by such a display of immovable and unappeasable malignity. "Take ye him and crucify him," he says; 'crucify him as best you can, but do not expect that I shall countenance the deed by any countersigning of your sentence in condemning the man, as if I thought he deserved to die—take ye him and crucify him, for I find no fault in him.'

But the yielding Governor is not in this way to slip out of their hands; he, too, must be a party; and now, at last, they tell him what hitherto they had concealed—to show him that theirs was not such a groundless sentence as he imagined it to be—"We have a law," they said, "and by our law he ought to die, because he made himself the Son

of God." It is impossible to say what ideas that phrase, "the Son of God," excited in the mind of Pilate. He was familiar with all the legends of the heathen mythologies, which told of gods and demigods descending and living upon the earth. Like so many of the educated Romans of his day, he had thrown off all faith in their divinity, and yet somehow there still lingered within, a faith in something higher than humanity, some beings superior to our race. And what if this Jesus were one of these! never in all his intercourse with men, had he met one the least like this, one who looked so kinglike, so Godlike: Kinglike, Godlike, even there as he now stands with a robe of faded purple and a crown of plaited thorns. Never in kingly garments, never beneath imperial crown, did he see a sceptred sovereign stand so serene, so dignified, so far above the men that stood round him. Whatever the ideas were which passed through Pilate's mind when he heard that Jesus had made himself the Son of God, they deepened that awe which from the first had been creeping in upon and taking possession of his spirit;—he was the more afraid. Once

again, therefore, he takes Christ apart, and says to him, "*Whence art thou?*" 'In that first interview, you told me that your kingdom was not of this world, but whence art thou thyself? art thou of this earth, I mean like the rest of us, or art thou other than thou seemest,—comest thou indeed from heaven?' But Jesus gave him no answer. Of all the silences of our Lord that day, of which this in number was the fifth, it seems the most difficult to understand. Was it that Pilate, by the way in which he had then put the question, "What is truth?" without pausing for a reply, had forfeited his right to an answer now? Was it that Pilate was wholly unprepared to receive the answer; that it would have been a casting of pearls before swine to have told him whence Jesus was? Was it that the information, had it been given, while ineffectual to stop his course, might have aggravated Pilate's guilt, and therefore, in mercy, was withheld? We cannot tell; but we can perceive that the very silence was in itself an answer; for, supposing Jesus had been a mere man, had come into this world even as we all come, would he,

had he been sincere and upright, have hesitated to say whence he came? would he have allowed Pilate to remain in doubt? would he have suffered him, as his question evidently implied, to cherish the impression that he was something more than human? We can scarcely think he would. By his very silence, therefore, our Lord would throw Pilate back upon that incipient impression of his Divine origin, that it might be confirmed and strengthened in his breast.

But here again, even as in the first interview, the haughtiness of the man comes in to quench all deeper thought. Annoyed by this silence, this calmness, this apparent indifference of Jesus, Pilate, in all the pride of office, says, "Speakest thou not to me; knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and power to release thee?"—a very idle attempt to work upon the mere selfish fears of Christ;—a question that brings a speedy answer, one in which rebuke and sympathy are singularly blended: "Thou couldest have no power against me, except it were given thee from above." 'That power of thine, to crucify me or release, which I do not

dispute, which thou mayest exercise as thou pleasest,—do not think that it is a power original, underived, independent. Thou hast it, thou exercisest it but as Heaven permits; thou little knowest, indeed, what thou doest; it is as a mere holder of the power that thou art acting, acting at others' bidding; therefore, that Jewish Judge, who knowing far better at least than thou what it was he did, and who it was that he was giving up to death,'—"therefore he that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin." There is something surely very impressive here; that, sunk as Jesus was beneath the weight of his own sufferings—sufferings so acute that they well might have engrossed his thoughts and feelings,—he yet so calmly weighs in the judicial balance the comparative guilt of the actors in this sad scene, and excuses, as far as he is able, the actings of Pilate. It had something of its proper effect upon the Procurator. Instead of diminishing, it but increased the desire he already had to deliver him. He tried again; tried with still greater earnestness to effect his object. But again he failed, for now the last arrow in that

quiver of his adversaries is shot at him: "If thou let this man go, thou art not Cæsar's friend; whosoever maketh himself a king, speaketh against Cæsar." Pilate knew that already he stood upon uncertain ground with the imperial authorities; he knew that a fresh report of anything like unfaithfulness to Cæsar would cost him his office. The risk of losing all that by occupying that office he had hoped to gain, he was not prepared to face, and so, yielding to this last pressure, he gives way, and delivers up Jesus to be crucified.

Now, let us look a moment at the faults and at the virtues of this man. The fact that it fell to his lot to be Governor of Judea at this time, and to consign the Saviour to the cross, inclines us to form exaggerated notions of his criminality. He was not, let us believe, a worse governor than many who preceded and who followed him in that office. We know from other sources that he frequently showed but little regard to human life —recklessly, indeed, shed human blood, when the shedding of it ministered to the objects of his ambition; but we have no reason to believe that

he was a wantonly cruel man, or a particularly oppressive and tyrannical governor, as governors then went. His treatment of Christ was marked by anything but a contempt for justice and an absence of all human feeling. He showed a respect, a pity, a tenderness to Jesus Christ that, considering the little that he knew of him, excites our wonder. He struggled hard to evade the conclusion to which, with such unrelenting malignity, the Jewish leaders drove him. No other king, no other ruler with whom Christ or his Apostles had to do, acted half as conscientiously or half as tenderly as Pilate did. Herod, Felix, Agrippa,—compare their conduct in like circumstances with that of Pilate, and does he not in your estimate rise superior to them all? There is something in the compunctions, the relentings, the hesitations, the embarrassments of Pilate—those reiterated attempts of his to find a way of escape for himself and for Christ, that takes a strong hold upon our sympathy. We cannot but pity, even while forced to condemn. Condemn, indeed, we must; for—

1. He was false to his own convictions; he

was satisfied that Christ was innocent. Instead of acting at once and decidedly upon that conviction, he dallied and he parleyed with it; sought to find some way by which he might get rid of that clear and imperative duty which it laid upon him; and by so doing he weakened and unsettled this conviction, and prepared for its being overborne.

2. He exhibited a sad degree of vacillation, inconsistency, indecision. Now he throws all blame upon the priests: "I am innocent of his blood; see ye to it." Again he takes the entire responsibility upon himself: "Knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and power to release?" Now he pronounces Jesus innocent, yet with the same breath proposes to have him punished as guilty: now he gives him up, and then he has recourse to every kind of expedient to rescue. Unstable as water, he does not, he cannot succeed.

3. He allowed others to dictate to him. Carelessly and inconsiderately he submits that to their judgment which he should have kept wholly within his own hold. He becomes thus

as a wave of the sea, as a feather in the air, which every breeze of heaven bloweth about as it listeth.

4. He allowed worldly interest to predominate over the sense of duty. Such was the plain and simple issue to which it came at last: Do the thing he knew was right—acquit the Saviour—do that, and run all risks; or do the thing he knew was wrong—do that, and escape all danger. Such was the alternative which was at last presented to him. Alas for Pilate! he chose the latter. But let each of us now ask himself, Had I been placed exactly in his position, with those lights only to guide me that he then had, should I have acted a better and bolder part? We may think and hope we should; but, in thinking so and hoping so, let us remember how often, when conscience and duty pointed in the one direction, and passion and self-interest pointed in the other, we have acted over and over again the very part of Pilate; hesitated and wavered, and argued and debated, and opened our ears to what others told us, or allowed ourselves to be borne away by some strong tide that

was running in the wrong direction. Nay more, how often have we, knowing as we do, or profess to do, who Christ was, whence he came, what he did for us, and whither he has gone,—how often have we given him up into unfriendly hands, to do with him what they would, without even the washing of our own, or the saying what we thought of him.

VII.

THE DAUGHTERS OF JERUSALEM WEEPING.[1]

THE mockeries of the Judgment Hall ended, Jesus is delivered into the hands of the officers, to be led away to the place of execution. It cannot now be settled with certainty or exactness, where this hill of Calvary was situated, nor how far it was from the residence of Pilate. It lay, we know, without the city gate, and a very ancient tradition points us to a low, bare, rounded elevation, outside and near the walls, which resembled somewhat in its form a human skull, and is supposed to have got from that resemblance the name it bore, of Golgotha. If that indeed was Calvary, the way was but a short one which the sad procession had to traverse. First, however, ere beginning the mournful march, they strip our Lord of the purple robe

[1] Matt. xxvii. 31-34; Luke xxiii. 27-32.

they had thrown around his bleeding shoulders, and put his own raiment on him. It is not said that they took the crown of thorns from his bleeding brow; he may have worn that to the last. It was part of the degradation of a public crucifixion that the doomed one should assist in carrying to the place of crucifixion the instrument of death. They might have spared this indignity to Jesus; they might have had some compassion as they saw with what a faint and weary step he walked. But compassion has no place in the hearts of these crucifiers, and so they lay the common burden on him. He sinks beneath the load. They must relieve him of it; but who will bear it instead? not one of themselves will stoop to the low office. A stranger, a man from Africa, Simon the Cyrenian, coming in from the country, meets them by the way. He would willingly have let the crowd go by that presses on to Calvary. But he is the very kind of man whom they can turn into a tool to do this piece of drudgery. They lay hold of him and compel him to take up what Jesus was too weak to bear. Unwillingly he had to obey, to

turn upon his steps, and follow Jesus, bearing after him the cross; a reluctant instrument of an overbearing soldiery and a haughty priesthood.

So far as we can learn, Simon had no previous knowledge of, had no special interest in Christ; instead of any great sympathy with him at the moment, he may rather have felt and resented it as a hardship, that such a service should have been exacted of him, and in such imperious fashion. But this compulsory companionship with Jesus in the bearing of the cross, carried him to Calvary; the sad tragedy enacted there forced him with so many other idle spectators to the spot. He stood there gazing upon the scene; he heard the words that came from the lips of Jesus; he felt the three hours' darkness come down, and wrap them all around. As the darkness cleared away, he saw the centurion standing transfixed before the central cross, as Jesus cried with a loud voice, and gave up the ghost. He heard that Roman officer, a stranger like himself, break forth with the exclamation: "Truly this was the Son of God!" What impression all that he saw

and heard then made upon him we are not informed. From its being said, however, that he was the father of Alexander and Rufus, whom Mark speaks of as being well-known disciples of the Lord, may we not indulge the belief that he who, when he was lifted up, was to draw all men unto him, that day drew this Cyrenian to himself; that the sight of those sufferings and of that death led Simon to inquire; that the inquiry conducted to discipleship; and that ever after he had to thank the Lord for the strange arrangement of his providence, which led him along that way into the city, at the very time when they were leading Jesus out to be crucified; that he met the crowd at the very moment that they were wanting some one to do that menial service which in so rough a manner they pressed him to undertake?

Another incident marked the sorrowful procession to Calvary. Some women of the city, looking at him, as first he bends beneath the cross, and then, with aspect so meek and gentle, yet so sad and sorrow-stricken, moves onward to be crucified, have their feelings so deeply touched,

that, unable to restrain their emotions, they openly bewail and lament his doom. These are not the women who had followed him from Galilee, and been in the habit of ministering to him. No more than Simon, were they numbered with his disciples. It was not with such grief as any of the Marys would have felt, had they been in the crowd, that these women were affected. They were not lamenting the loss of a teacher, a master, a friend they had learned to revere and love. They had joined the crowd as it gathered in the city thoroughfares through which it passed. The singular but common curiosity to look at men who are soon to die, and to see how they comport themselves in front of death, has drawn them on. Soon, however, out of the three who are going forth to be crucified, their attention fixes upon Jesus. Something of him they may have known before; some part of his story they may have picked up by the way. They hear nothing friendly to him from any who are there around them. The spirit of the crowd they mingle with is one of rude and bitter hatred towards him. But woman's loving eye looks on

him, woman's tender heart is melted at the sight; and, despite of all the restraint that might have been imposed on them by the tone and temper of that crowd, revelling with savage delight at the prospect of his crucifixion, and led on by some of the chief men of the city, they give free vent to that generous pity which swells their bosoms. They weep as they follow him. This weeping—the only circumstance, so far as we know, attending his passage out to Calvary, that attracted the special notice of our Lord—was the only one which induced him to break the patient silence he all along observed. But how does he notice it? What does he say? He stops; he turns; he fixes his eye upon the weepers; and he says, "Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children."

"Weep *not for me.*" Does he reject that simple tribute of sympathy which they are rendering? Is he in any sense displeased at the tears they shed? Does he blame or forbid such tears? Not thus are we to interpret our Saviour's words. It may be quite true that it was not from any very

deep, much less from any very pure or holy fountain, that those tears were flowing. It may have been nothing about him but the shame and the agony he had to suffer which drew them out. Still, they are tears of kindly pity, and such tears it never could have been his meaning or intention to condemn. He had freely shed such tears himself. They fell before the tomb of Lazarus, fell simply at sight of the weeping sisters, and of the Jews weeping along with them. Sympathy with human suffering, simply and purely as such, claims the sanction of the tears which upon that occasion the Saviour shed; and that sanction covers the bewailing of these daughters of Jerusalem. Jesus is not displeased with, Jesus does not reject, the expression of their pity. So far from this, the tender sympathy that they show for him stirs a still deeper sympathy for them within his heart. This is the way that he acknowledges and thanks them for their tears. He thinks of them, he feels for them; he forgets his own impending griefs as he contemplates theirs. It had been but an hour or so before, that all the people who gathered round the bar

of Pilate had cried out, "His blood be on us, and on our children!" How little did they know what a doom it was they thus invoked upon themselves; how near and how terrible! But Jesus knew it; had thought of it perhaps when that wild cry arose; was thinking of it still. He had those scenes of famine, fire, and slaughter, when that ill-fated city of his crucifiers should see the execution of the sentence they had called down upon their own heads,—he had them all before his eye when he turned to those women by the way, and said to them, "Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children. For, behold, the days are coming, in the which they shall say, Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the paps which never gave suck. Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us; and to the hills, Cover us."

Many of the very women who were lamenting Jesus by the way, may have perished in the siege of Jerusalem. That siege took place within less than forty years from the day of our Lord's crucifixion. Some of the younger mothers of

that weeping band, would not have then seen out the threescore years and ten of human life. Their children would be all in middle life, constituting the generation upon which those woes were to descend which, three days before, while sitting quietly on the Mount of Olives with his disciples, looking across the valley upon the Holy City, Jesus had described by saying, that in those days there should be great tribulation, such as was not from the beginning of the world to that time, no, nor ever should be again. When in the straitness of that terrible siege, before the terrors of the last assault, they crept into the underground passages and sewers of the city; when those who escaped out of the city hid themselves in the dens and rocks of the mountains,—then were those prophecies of Isaiah and Hosea, which our Saviour had obviously before him—some of whose words, indeed, he quotes—in part fulfilled. But just as, in that more lengthened discourse which our Lord had so recently delivered to his disciples, he mixed up in a way that it is impossible wholly to unravel, the destruction of Jerusalem, his second coming, and

the end of the world; so also, even within the compass of this short speech to the daughters of Jerusalem, it is easy enough to perceive that, beyond that nearer and more limited event, of which these women and their children were to be spectators, our Lord looks forward to the wider judgment, which at the close of all was to enfold the whole world of the impenitent in its embrace.

And widening thus, as we are warranted to do, the scope and bearing of our Lord's words to these daughters of Jerusalem, let us ask ourselves, what message of instruction and of warning do they convey to us and to all men? First, I think we shall not be wrong if we interpret them as indicating to us the unprofitableness of that sympathy with human suffering which takes in nothing but the suffering it sees, and which expends itself alone in tears. The sympathy excited in the breasts of these women of Jerusalem was of this kind. It was the spectacle of human grief then before their eyes which had awakened it; there was a danger, at least, that those sensibilities, so deeply moved as long as the spectacle was

before them, should collapse when that spectacle was withdrawn, and leave the heart quickened, it might be, in its susceptibility to the mere emotion of compassion, yet not otherwise improved. Weep not, then, the Saviour says to them, and says to us; weep not for me; weep not, or weep not long, and weep not idly, over any sight or story of human suffering which calls not for your interference, which you have no power, not even by the sympathy that you expend upon it, to mitigate; or if, naturally and irresistibly, properly and becomingly, your tears flow forth, stop not at their shedding, do not indolently indulge the mere sentiment of pity; such indulgence may become but a piece of selfish gratification, narrowing the heart and paralysing the hand for the dispositions and the doings of a true and genuine benevolence. Pity was never meant by the Creator to be separately or exclusively cultivated as an isolated emotion; it was meant to be the spring and the ally of a ready and generous aid held out to its object; to be the stimulus to, and the support of active effort. And such is the structure of that beautiful and nicely-balanced instrument, the

human spirit, that if this established connexion between action and emotion be overlooked; if you foster the one without letting it lead on to the other, you do a serious damage to the soul; you create in one region a monstrous overgrowth, in another a stunted deformity; and you dislocate and disconnect what the Creator intended should always be conjoined.

Take here the familiar instance of indulging to excess the reading of exciting fiction—tales in which the hero of the story passes through terrible trials, endurances, agonies of mind and heart. Our heart may pulsate all through with pity as we read; we may wet with tears the page that spreads out some heartrending scene. Now, I am not going to say that it is in itself a wrong, or a sinful thing, or even a hurtful thing, to read such stories. On the contrary, I believe that it is not wrong; that it may be as beneficial as it is agreeable occasionally to do so. There are peculiar and there are good services to mind and heart that a well-executed fiction may render, which you cannot have rendered in any other way so well. But let such kind of reading usurp

the place that should be given to other and better employment; let the taste for it be gratified, without the consideration of anything beyond the pleasure that it yields; let the heart of the reader, with all its manifold affections, give itself up to be played upon continually by the hand of some great master in the art of quickening to the uttermost its sympathies with human passions and human griefs; will that heart, whose sensibilities may thus be stimulated until it yield to the gentlest touch of the great describer, will it be made kinder and better in its dispositions? will it even be made more tender to the sorrows of the real sufferers among whom it lives and moves? Is it not notoriously the reverse? You will find few more selfish, few less practically benevolent, than those who expend all their stores of pity upon ideal woes. It is a deep well of pity, that which God has sunk in most human hearts. They are healing, refreshing, fructifying waters that it sends forth to cover the sorrows of the sorrowful: but if these waters be dammed up within the heart, they become first stagnant, and then the breeders of many

noxious vapours, under which the true and simple charities wither away.

But let us now give to our Lord's words a more direct application to himself; to himself as the bearer of the cross. It cannot be thought that all sympathy with the Man of sorrows is forbidden. The recital, especially of his last sufferings, would not have been so full and so minute as it is in the sacred page, had it not been intended to take hold thereby of that sympathy. But the contemplation of Christ merely as a sufferer, if it terminate in nothing else than the excitement of sympathy, is a barren contemplation. Offer him nothing besides your compassion, he repudiates and rejects it. It is to dishonour the Redeemer to class him with those unfortunates, those unwilling victims of distress, whose unexampled sorrows knock hard at the heart of pity. Our pity he does not ask, he does not need. He spreads out before us his unparalleled griefs; he says, "Behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow; but he does so not to win from us compassion, but to prove how he has loved us, loved us even to the death, suffering

and dying for our redemption. His sorrows should set us thinking of our own sins. Those sufferings which rested upon him when he took his place as our great Head and Representative, should bring up before our minds the sufferings which hang suspended over the heads of the finally impenitent and unbelieving.

"Weep not for me, but weep for yourselves: for if these things be done in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?" He was himself the Green Tree; the fresh, the vigorous Vine,—its stock full of sap, its branches all nourished by union with that parent, life-giving Stem. Was he, then—in condition so unlike to that of fuel ready for the fire—cast into that great furnace of affliction? Had he to endure all its scorching, though to him unconsuming flames? What shall be done with him whose heart softens not at the sight of this divine and all-enduring love: whose heart closes up and hardens against God and Christ, till it becomes like one of those dry and withered branches which men gather and cast into the fire? If God spared not his own Son, but gave him up

to the death for us all, who is there, among the rejecters and despisers of such a Saviour, that he will spare? Or if you would have the same argument set before you in yet another form, take it as presented by Peter: "For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God? And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?" I shall make no attempt either to expand or enforce the argument thus employed. Let me only remind you, that it was by these strange and solemn words of warning, "If they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?" that our Lord closed the public teaching of his ministry upon earth. Quiet as our skies now look, and secure and stable as all things around us seem, the days are coming,—he has told us among his latest sayings,—when those who resist the approaches of his love shall see him in other guise, and when at the sight they "shall cry to the mountains, Fall on us, and to the hills, Cover us; hide us from the face of him

that sitteth upon the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: for the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?" How wise and good a thing were it for us all, in prospect of such days coming, to hide ourselves even now in the clefts of the smitten Rock; to hide ourselves in Jesus Christ as our loving Lord and Saviour; that, safe within that covert, the tribulation of those days may not reach us.

And now let me crave your attention, for a moment or two, to that singular tie of thought which so quickly linked together in the mind of the Saviour the sight of those sorrowful daughters of Jerusalem, with the fearful doom that was impending over their city. It is very remarkable how frequently and how vividly, in all its minute details, the coming destruction of Jerusalem was present to his thoughts during the last days and hours of his earthly ministry. From the day that he raised Lazarus from the grave,—knowing that his enemies had taken counsel together to put him to death,—Jesus walked no more openly among the Jews. He retired to the country beyond Jordan, near to the wilderness. His hour

at last approached, and he set his face to go up to Jerusalem to be crucified. He was in a part of the country that was under Herod's jurisdiction, and they told him that Herod sought to kill him. It cannot be, he said, that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem. The naming of the holy city; the thought of all the blood of all the prophets that was to cry out against her, and to seal her doom, filled his heart with sadness, and instantly he broke out into the exclamation, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem! thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate!"

On the Saturday before his death he arrives at Bethany. Next day he ascends the Mount of Olives. In the city they have heard of his coming. They go out to meet him, they hail him as they had never done before. Garments and palm-branches are spread upon the ground that he is to tread. Before him and around him the voices of the multitude are shouting "Ho-

sanna! Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord. Hosanna to the Son of David! Hosanna in the highest!" The ridge of the hill is reached, and Jerusalem bursts upon the view, lying across the valley spread out before the eye. He pauses; he gazes; his eyes they fill with tears. How strange it looks to that jubilant multitude! Ah! other sounds than their hosannas are falling on the Saviour's inner ear; other sights than that of their waving palm-branches are rising before his prophetic eye. He weeps; and without naming it, looking at the doomed city, and pointing to it, he says: "If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes. For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, and shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation."

Christ's last day in the Temple and in Jeru-

salem was one of great excitement, of varied incident. Question after question about his authority to teach, about the payment of tribute-money, about the resurrection of the dead, is put to him. Attempt after attempt is made to entangle him in his talk. At last, from being the assailed, Jesus in his turn becomes the assailant, puts the question about Christ being David's Son and David's Lord, which none of them can answer, and then proceeds to launch his terrible denunciations at the Scribes and Pharisees. Woe is heaped upon woe, till all the righteous blood shed upon the earth seems coming on the men of that generation, and concentratedly upon that city of Jerusalem. Again, as when he first turned his face towards the holy city, the thought melts his spirit into tenderness; the indignation dissolves and passes away, as, taking up the same words he had used before, he exclaims, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem! thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house

is left unto you desolate,"—our Lord's last words within the Temple.

As they went out in the afternoon of that day, "Master," said one of his disciples to him, "see what manner of stones and what buildings are here! Jesus answering said unto him, Seest thou these great buildings? Verily I say unto you, there shall not be left here one stone upon another that shall not be thrown down." Later in the evening of that day—two days before his crucifixion—he sat upon the Mount of Olives over against the Temple, looking once again at these great buildings, and in answer to an inquiry of his disciples, tired though he must have been with all the incidents of a most harassing day, he entered upon that lengthened prophecy in which he told how Jerusalem should be trodden down of the Gentiles. And now again, in this last stage of his way to Calvary, the days that he had spoken of so particularly in that prophecy are once more before his eyes. How shall we explain all this? How was it that the city of Jerusalem had such a hold upon the heart of Jesus Christ? How was it that the joys and the

sorrows, the provocations and the sympathies of his latest days, all alike, by some mysterious link of association, called up before his thoughts the terrible calamities which Jerusalem was to endure? Grant all that can be claimed for Jerusalem in the way of pre-eminence both as to character and destiny over all the cities of this earth; acknowledge the power that the close connexion between our Lord's own death and its destruction must have exerted upon his mind; but beside all this, may we not believe that in the human heart of Jesus, as we know that there was room for special affection, individual attachment, so also was there room for the patriotic sentiment, that love of country by which every true man of woman born is characterized? Jesus was a Jew. Judea was the land of his birth. Jerusalem was the chief city of that land. Around its earlier and its later history there gathered all of joyful and of sorrowful interest that could touch a Jewish heart. And it touched the spirit of Jesus to contemplate its downfall. Are we wrong in thinking that with that which was divine, and that which was broadly human,

there mingled a Jewish, a patriotic element in the grief which shed tears over its destruction? If love of country form part of a perfect man, shall we not believe that, purified from all imperfection,—its narrowness, its exclusiveness, its selfishness,—that affection had a place and found a home in the bosom of our Lord?

At such a season as this in the history of our own land we would fain believe so. A common loss, a common grief, a common sympathy, has knit all hearts together, as they have but rarely been united. He can have been no ordinary Prince, whose death has caused so general, such universal grief. And she assuredly is no ordinary Queen, whose sorrow has been made their own by so many millions of human hearts. There is something cementing, purifying, ennobling, in a whole nation mourning as ours does now. Let us try to consecrate that mourning, and whilst we give to our beloved Sovereign the entire sympathy of our heart, only wishing that she fully knew[1] what a place she holds in the

[1] This Lecture was delivered on the Sunday succeeding the death of the Prince Consort, and before full expression of public sympathy had been given.

affections of her people, let us lift up our hearts in gratitude to Him who has bestowed on us in her such a priceless treasure, and let us lift up prayers to heaven, that she may have imparted to her that comfort and that strength, which, in such sorrow as hers, the highest and the humblest of earth equally need, and which are bestowed alike on all who ask, and trust, and hope, in and through Jesus Christ our Lord.

VIII.

THE PENITENT THIEF.[1]

ONE of the first things done by the Roman soldiers to whom the execution of the sentence was committed, was to strip our Saviour and to nail him to the cross. We do not know whether that cruel operation of transfixing the hands and feet was performed while the cross yet lay upon the ground, or after it was erected. They offered him,—in kindness let us believe rather than in scorn, wine mingled with myrrh, an anodyne or soothing draught, fitted to dull or deaden the sense of pain, but he waved it away; he would do nothing that might lull the senses, but might at the same time impair the full, clear, mental consciousness. The clothing of the criminal was in all such instances a legal perquisite of the executioners, and the soldiers proceeded to divide

[1] Matt. xxvii. 35-37; John xix. 20-22; Luke xxiii. 23-43.

it among them. The other parts of his outer raiment they found it comparatively easy to divide; but when they came to his inner coat, finding it of somewhat unusual texture, woven from the top throughout—it may have been his mother's workmanship, or the gift of some of those kind women who had ministered to his wants and comforts—they found no way of disposing of it so easy as to cast lots among them whose it should be, fulfilling thus, but all unconsciously, that Scripture, which, apart from this manner of disposal of the clothing, we might not well have understood how it could be verified—"They parted my raiment among them, and for my vesture they did cast lots."

Pilate's last act that morning, after he had given up Jesus to be crucified, was to have the ground of his sentence declared in a writing which he directed should be placed conspicuously upon the cross above his head. To secure that this writing should be seen and read of all men, Pilate further ordered that it should be written in Greek, and Latin, and Hebrew, the three chief languages of the time. All the four evangelists record what

this writing or superscription was, yet in each the words of which it was composed are differently reported. No two of them agree as to the precise terms of the title, though all of them are perfectly at one as to its meaning and intent. It does not in the least surprise us when four different narrators of some spoken, and it may be lengthened discourse, vary here and there in the exact words imputed to the speaker. It is somewhat different when it is a short written public document, like that placed over the Saviour's head on this occasion, the contents of which are given. Here we might naturally have expected that the very words —*literatim et verbatim*—would have been preserved. And if it be not so, in this case as well as in others equally if not more remarkable, such as that of the few words spoken by the voice from heaven at the time of the Saviour's baptism, and those spoken by our Lord himself at the institution of his own Supper,—if it be the general sense, and not the exact words which the sacred writers present to us, is there no warning in this against the expectation of finding a minute and literal exactness everywhere in the gospel narrative? no

warning against our treating that narrative as if such kind of exactness had been intended, and is to be found therein?

The sight of this title, posted up so prominently above the head of Jesus, annoyed the Jews. The Chief Priests were especially provoked; nor have we far to go to discover the reason of their provocation. Among the last things Pilate said to them, when he brought out Jesus, had been, "Behold your king!" And among the last things they said to Pilate, in the heat of their exasperation, and the urgency of their desire to have Jesus ordered off to instant crucifixion, was, "Away, away with him! crucify him! *we have no king but Cæsar*,"—this man is not only a false pretender, but he and all others except Cæsar are traitors who make any such pretension. Thus, in that unguarded hour, did they absolutely renounce all desire or hope of having a king of their own. Pilate took them at their word, and put over Christ's head such a title as implied that any one claiming to be king of the Jews might, on that ground alone, whatever his rights and claims—on the ground simply

of the allegiance which the Jews owed, and which the Chief Priests had avowed, to the Roman Emperor—be justly condemned to death. When they looked at that legal declaration of his crime placed above Christ's head, and thought of all that it implied, the Chief Priests hurried back to Pilate, and asked him to make a modification of it, which should leave it open that there might be another king of the Jews besides Cæsar. "Write not," they said to Pilate, "The King of the Jews; but that he said, I am King of the Jews." Let it be made patent, that it was as an illegitimate claimant that he was put to death. In ill humour with himself, in worse humour with them, Pilate is in no mood to listen to their proposal. He will hold them tightly to their own denial and disavowal of any king but Cæsar; and so, with a somewhat sharp and surly decisiveness, he dismisses them by saying, "What I have written I have written."

Meanwhile, the soldiers have completed their cruel work. It was when in their hands, or soon after, that Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Such rough hand-

ling as that to which our Lord had been subjected, such acute bodily suffering as it had inflicted, have a strong tendency to irritate, and to render the sufferer indifferent to everything beyond his own injuries and pains. But how far above this does Jesus rise! No murmuring; no threatening; no accusation; no lament; no cry for help; no invoking of vengeance; no care for, or thought of self; no obtruding of his own forgiveness. It is not, *I forgive* you; but, "Father, forgive them." No sidelong glance even at his own wrongs and sufferings, in stating for what the forgiveness is solicited. "They know not what they do;" in this simple and sublime petition, not the slightest, most shadowy trace of self-consideration. It is from a heart occupied with thought for others, and not with its own woes; it is out of the depths of an infinite love and pity, which no waters can quench, that there comes forth the purest and highest petition for mercy that ever ascended to the Father of mercies in the heavens. It is from the lips of a Brother-Man that this petition comes, yet from One who can speak to God as to his own Father. It is from Jesus on the cross it

comes; from him who submits to all the shame and agony of crucifixion, that as the Lamb that once was slain for us, he might earn, as it were, the right thus to pray, and furnish himself with a plea in praying, such as none but he possesseth and can employ. As a Prophet, he had spoken to the daughters of Jerusalem by the way; as the great High Priest, he intercedes for his crucifiers from the cross.

Nor are we to confine that intercession to those for whom in the first instance it was exerted. Wide over the whole range of sinful humanity does that prayer of our Redeemer extend. For every sinner of our race, if it be true of him that he knew not what he did, that prayer of Jesus goes up to the throne of mercy. It was in comparative ignorance that those soldiers and those Jews crucified Jesus. Had they known what they did, we have an apostle's testimony for believing they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But their ignorance did not take away their guilt. Had it done so, there had been no need of an intercessor in their behalf. It was with wicked hands they did that deed. Nor did

their ignorance in any way entitle them to forgiveness; then might it have been left to the Father to deal with them without any intercession of the Son. But their ignorance brought them and their doings within the pale of that Divine mercy for which the prayer of the great Mediator was presented. How far we are entitled to carry this idea, I shall not presume to say. Was it because of that element—the element of an imperfect knowledge of what was done—that for the transgression of man a Saviour and a sacrifice were provided,—not provided for the sin of fallen angels, of whom it could not, in the same sense, be said that they knew not what they did? Is it to that degree in which a partial ignorance of what we do, prevails—that ignorance not being of itself entirely our own fault—that our transgression comes within the scope and power of the intercession of the Redeemer? To questions such as these we venture no reply. Only let us remember that sins rise in magnitude as they are committed against light, and that the clearer and fuller that light is, and the greater and more determined and obstinate our re-

sistance to it, the nearer we approach to that condition which the apostle had in his eye when he wrote these words of warning: "For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance, seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame; for if we sin wilfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries."

Their cruel work completed, the soldiers sit down before the cross to watch. Behind them the people stand beholding. There is a momentary stillness. It is broken by some passers by—for the cross was raised near some public thoroughfare—who, stopping for a moment as they pass, look up, and wag their heads at Jesus, saying contemptuously to him, "Ah! thou that destroyest the Temple, and buildest it in three

days, save thyself! If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross." That ribald speech strikes the key-note for other like fiendish taunts and gibes. The Chief Priests, the scribes, the elders — their dignity forgotten — hasten to join the mockery; to deaden perhaps some unwelcome voices rising within their hearts. They do not act, however, like the honest common people, who in their passing by look up at or speak directly to Jesus,—they do not, they dare not. They stand repeating, as Mark tells us, *among themselves;* saying *of* him, not *to* him, "He saved others, himself he cannot save; let him save himself if he be Christ, the chosen of God. If he be the King of Israel, let him come down from the cross, and we will believe him. He trusted in God (strange that they should thus blasphemously use the very words of the twenty-second Psalm), let him deliver him now if he will have him, for he said, I am the Son of God." The Roman soldiers get excited by the talk they hear going on around. They rise, and they offer him some vinegar to drink, repeating one of the current taunts, till at last one of the male-

factors, hanging on the cross beside him, does the same.

Strange, certainly, that among those who rail at Jesus at such a time, one of those crucified along with him should be numbered. Those brought out to share together the shame and agony of a public execution, have generally looked on each other with a kindly and indulgent eye. Outcasts from the world's sympathy, they have drawn largely upon the sympathy of one another. Since they were to die thus together, they have desired to die at peace. Many an old, deep grudge has been buried at the gallows-foot. But here, where there is nothing to be mutually forgotten, nothing to be forgiven, nothing whatever to check the operation of that common law by which community in suffering begets sympathy; here, instead of sympathy, there is scorn; instead of pity, reproach. What called forth such feelings, at such a time, and from such a quarter? In part it may have been due to the circumstance that it was upon Jesus that the main burden of the public reproach was flung. Bad men like to join with others in blaming those who either are,

or are supposed to be, worse men than themselves. And so it may have brought something like relief, may even have ministered something like gratification to this man to find that when brought out for execution, the tide of public indignation directed itself so exclusively against Jesus—by making so much more of whose criminality, he thinks to make so much less of his own. Or is it the spirit of the religious scoffer that vents here its expiring breath? All he sees, and all he hears —those pouting lips, those wagging heads, those upbraiding speeches—tell him what it was in Jesus that had kindled such enmity against him, and too thoroughly does he go in with that spirit which is rife around the cross, not to join in the expression of it, and so whilst others are railing at Jesus, he too will rail. It is difficult to give any more satisfactory explanation of his conduct, difficult in any case like this to fathom the depths even of a single human spirit; but explain it as you may, it was one drop added to the cup of bitterness which our Lord that day took into his hands, and drunk to the very dregs, that not only were his enemies permitted to do with him

what they would, but the very criminal who is crucified by his side, deems himself entitled to cast such reproachful sayings in his teeth.

But he is not suffered to rail at Jesus unrebuked, and the rebuke comes most appropriately from his brother malefactor, who turning upon him, says, "Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation?" "Dost not thou fear God?"—he does not need to say, Dost thou not fear man? for man has already done all that man can do. But, Dost not thou fear God? He knows then that there is a God to fear, a God before whose bar he and his brother sufferer are soon to appear; a God to whom they shall have to give account, not only for every evil action that in their past lives they have done, but for every idle word that in dying they shall speak. He knows it now, he feels it now,—had he known and felt it sooner, it might have saved him from hanging on that cross,—that over and above the condemnation of man which he had so lightly thought of, and so fearlessly had braved, there is another and weightier condemnation, even that of the great God, into whose hands, as a God of

judgment, it is a fearful thing for the impenitent to fall.

"And we indeed justly." No questioning of the proof, no quarrelling with the law, no reproaching of the judge. He neither thinks that his crime was less heinous than the law made it, nor his punishment greater than the crime deserved. Nor do you hear from this man's lips what you so often hear from men placed in like circumstances, the complaint that he had been taken, and he must die, whilst so many others, greater criminals than himself, are suffered to go at large unpunished. At once and unreservedly he acknowledges the justice of the sentence, and in so doing, shows a spirit penetrated with a sense of guilt. And not only is he thoroughly convinced of his own guilt, he is as thoroughly convinced of Christ's innocence. "We indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this man hath done nothing amiss." Little as he may have seen or known before of Jesus, what he had witnessed had entirely convinced him that His was a case of unmerited and unprovoked persecution; that he was an innocent

man whom these Jews, to gratify their own spleen, to avenge themselves in their own ignoble quarrel with him, were hounding to the death.

But he goes much further than to give expression merely to his conviction of Christ's innocence,—and it is here we touch upon the spiritual marvels of this extraordinary incident. Turning from speaking to his brother malefactor, fixing his eye upon, and addressing himself to Jesus, as he hangs upon the neighbouring cross, he says, "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom." How came he, at such a time and in such circumstances, to call Jesus Lord? how came he to believe in the coming of his kingdom? It is going the utmost length to which supposition can be carried, to imagine that he had never met with Jesus till he had met him that morning to be led out in company with him to Calvary. He saw the daughters of Jerusalem weeping by the way; he heard those words of Jesus which told of the speaker's having power to withdraw the veil which hides the future; he had seen and read the title nailed

above the Saviour's head, proclaiming him to be the King of the Jews; from the lips of the passers-by, of the Chief Priests, the elders, the soldiers, he had gathered that this Jesus, now dying by his side, had saved others from that very death he is himself about to die, had professed a supreme trust in God, had claimed to be the Christ, the Chosen, the Son of God, and he had seen and heard enough to satisfy him that all which Jesus had claimed to be he truly was. Such were some of the materials put by Divine Providence into this man's hands whereon to build his faith; such the broken fragments of the truth loosely scattered in his way. He takes them up, collects, combines; the Enlightening Spirit shines upon the evidence thus afforded, shines in upon his quickened soul; and there brightly dawns upon his spirit the sublime belief that in that strange sufferer by his side he sees the long-promised Messiah, the Saviour of mankind, the Son and equal of the Father, who now, at the very time that his mind has opened to a sense of his great iniquity, and he stands trembling on the brink of eternity, reveals himself as so near

at hand, so easy of access. His faith, thus quickly formed, goes forth into instant exercise, and, turning to Jesus, he breathes into his convenient ear the simple but ardent prayer, "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom."

The hostile multitude around are looking forward to Christ's approaching death, as to that decisive event which shall at once, and for ever, scatter to the winds all the idle rumours that have been rife about him; all his vain pretensions to the Messiahship. The faith of Christ's own immediate followers is ready to give way before that same event; they bury it in his grave, and have only to say of him afterwards, "We hoped that it had been he that should have redeemed Israel." Yet here, amid the triumph of enemies, and the failure of the faith of friends, is one who, conquering all the difficulties that sense opposes to its recognition, discerns, even through the dark envelope which covers it, the hidden glory of the Redeemer, and openly hails him as his Lord and King. Marvellous, indeed, the faith in our Lord's divinity which sprung up so suddenly in such an unlikely region; which shone out so

brightly in the very midnight of the world's unbelief. Are we wrong in saying that, at the particular moment when that testimony to Christ's divinity was borne, there was not another full believer in that divinity but this dying thief? If so, was it not a fitting thing, that he who was never to be left without a witness, now when there was but one witness left, should have had this solitary testimony given to his divinity at the very time when it was passing into almost total eclipse; so nearly wholly shrouded from mortal vision? There were many to call him Lord when he rose triumphant from the tomb; there is but one to call him Lord as he hangs dying on the cross.

But let us look upon the prayer of the dying thief not only as a public testimony to the kingly character and prerogative of Jesus, but as the prayer of individual, appropriating faith; the earnest, hopeful, trustful application of a dying sinner to a dying Saviour. His ideas of Christ's character and office may have been obscure; the nature of that kingdom into possession of which he was about to enter, he may have but imper-

fectly understood. He knew it, however, to be a spiritual kingdom; he felt that individually he had forfeited his right of admission to its privileges and its joys; he believed that it lay with Jesus to admit him into that kingdom. Not with a spirit void of apprehension, may he have made his last appeal. It may have seemed to him a very doubtful thing, whether, when relieved from the sharp pains of crucifixion, the suffering over, and the throne of the kingdom reached, Jesus would think of him amid the splendours and the joys of his new kingly state. Doubts of a kindred character have often haunted the hearts of the penitent, the hearts of the best and the holiest; but there were two things of which he had no doubt, that Jesus could save him if he would, and that if he did not, he should perish. And it is out of these two simple elements that genuine faith is always formed, a deep, pervading, subduing consciousness of our unworthiness, a simple and entire trust in Christ.

It has been often and well said, that whilst this one instance of faith in Jesus formed at the eleventh hour is recorded in the New Testament,

in order that none, even to the last moment of their being, should despair,—there is but this one instance, that none may presume upon a death-bed repentance. And even this instance teaches most impressively that the faith which justifies always sanctifies; that the faith which brings forgiveness and opens the gates of Paradise to the dying sinner carries with it a renovating power; that the faith which conveys the title, works at the same time the meetness for the heavenly inheritance. Let a man die that hour in which he truly and cordially believes, that hour his passage into the heavenly kingdom is made secure; but let a window be opened that hour into his soul, let us see into all the secrets thereof, and we shall discover that morally and spiritually there has been a change in inward character corresponding to the change in legal standing or relationship with God. It was so with this dying thief. True, we have but a short period of his life before us, and in that period only two short sayings to go upon; happily, however, sayings of such a kind, and spoken in such circumstances, as to preclude all doubt of

their entire honesty and truthfulness; and what do they reveal of the condition of that man's mind and heart? What tenderness of conscience is here; what deep reverence for God; what devout submission to the divine will; what entire relinquishment of all personal grounds of confidence before God; what a vivid realizing of the world of spirits; what a humble trust in Jesus; what a zeal for the Saviour's honour; what an indignation at the unworthy treatment he was receiving! May we not take that catalogue of the fruits of genuine repentance which an apostle has drawn up for us, and applying it here, say of this man's repentance,—Behold what carefulness it wrought in him; yea, what clearing of himself; yea, what indignation; yea, what fear; yea, what vehement desire; yea, what zeal; yea, what revenge! In all things he approved himself to be a changed man, in the desires and dispositions and purposes of his heart. The belief has been expressed, that in all the earth there was not at that particular moment such a believer in the Lord's divinity as he; would it be going too far to couple with that belief this other, that in all the earth, and

at that moment, there was not another man inwardly riper and readier for entrance into Paradise?

"Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom." Loud and angry voices have for hours been ringing in the vexed ear of Jesus,—voices whose blasphemy and inhumanity wounded him far more than the mere personal antipathy they breathed. Amid these harsh and grating sounds, how new, how welcome, how grateful, this soft and gentle utterance of desire, and trust, and love! It dropped like a cordial upon the fainting spirit of our Lord, the only balm that earth came forth to lay upon his wounded spirit. Let us, too, be grateful for that one soothing word addressed to the dying Jesus, and wherever the gospel is declared let these words which that man spake be repeated in memorial of him.

"Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom." He will not ask to be remembered *now;* he will not break in upon this season of his Lord's bitter anguish. He only asks that, when the sharp pains of his passion shall be over, the passage made, and the throne of the kingdom won, Jesus will, in his great mercy, *then* think of

him. Jesus will let him know that he does not need to wait so long; he will let him know that the Son of man hath power, even on earth, to forgive sin; that the hour never cometh when his ear is so heavy that it cannot hear, his hand so shortened that it cannot save; and the prayer has scarce been offered when the answer comes, "Verily, I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise."

The lips may have trembled that spake these words; soft and low may have been the tone in which they were uttered; but they were words of power,—words which only one Being who ever wore human form, could have spoken. His divinity is acknowledged: the moment it is so, it breaks forth into bright and beautiful manifestation. The hidden glory bursts through the dark cloud that veiled it, and, in all his omnipotence to save, Jesus stands revealed. What a rebuke to his crucifiers! They may strip his mortal body of its outward raiment, which these soldiers may divide among them as they please; his human soul they may strip of its outer garment of the flesh, and send it forth unclothed into the world

of spirits. But his kingly right to dispense the royal gift of pardon, his power to save, can they strip him of that? Nay, little as they know it, they are helping to clothe him with that power, at the very time when they think they are laying all his kingly pretensions in the dust. He will not do what they had so often in derision asked him that day to do;—he will not come down from the cross;—he will not give that proof of his divinity; he will not put forth his almighty power by exerting it upon the world of matter. But on this very cross he will give a higher proof of his divinity: he will exert that power, not over the world of matter, but over the world of spirits, by stretching forth his hand and delivering a soul from death, and carrying it with him that day into paradise.

"Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise." Jesus would not rise from the sepulchre alone; he would have others rise along with him. And so, even as he dies, the earthquake does its allotted work, work so strange for an earthquake to do,—it opens not a new grave for the living, it opens the old graves of

the dead; and as the third morning dawns, from the opened graves the bodies of the saints arise with the rising body of the Lord,—types and pledges of the general resurrection of the dead, verifying, by their appearance in the Holy City, the words of ancient prophecy: "Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in the dust; for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out her dead." And as Jesus would not rise from the sepulchre alone, so neither will he enter Paradise alone. He will carry one companion spirit with him to the place of the blessed; thus early giving proof of his having died upon that cross that others through his death might live, and live for ever. See, then, in the ransomed spirit borne that day to Paradise, the primal trophy of the power of the uplifted cross of Jesus! What saved this penitent thief? No water of baptism was ever sprinkled upon him; at no table of communion did he ever sit; of the virtue said to lie in sacramental rites he knew nothing. It was a simple believing look of a dying sinner upon a dying Saviour that did it. And that sight

has lost nothing of its power. Too many, alas! have passed, are still passing by that spectacle of Jesus upon the cross; going, one to his farm, another to his merchandise, and not suffering it to make its due impression on their hearts; but thousands upon thousands of the human race—we bless God for this—have gazed upon it with a look kindred to that of the dying thief, and have felt it exert upon them a kindred power. Around it, once more, let me ask you all to gather. Many here, I trust, as they look at it, can say, with adoring gratitude, He loved *me;* he gave himself for me; he was wounded for my transgression, he was bruised for mine iniquity; he is all my salvation, he is all my desire. Some may not be able to go so far; yet there is one step that all of us, who are in any degree alive to our obligations to redeeming love, can take—one prayer that we all may offer; and surely, if that petition got so ready audience when addressed to Jesus in the midst of his dying agonies, with certain hope of not less favourable audience may we take it up, and shaping it to meet our case, may say, Now that thou hast gone into thy kingdom, O Lord, remember me.

Yet once more let the words of our Lord be repeated, "To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise." But where this Paradise; what this Paradise? We can say, in answer to these questions, that with this heavenly Paradise into which the redeemed at death do enter, the ancient, the earthly Paradise is not fit to be compared. In the one, the direct intercourse with God was but occasional; in the other it shall be constant. In the one, the Deity was known only as he revealed himself in the works of creation and in the ways of his providence; in the other, it will be as the God of our redemption, the God and Father of our Lord and Saviour Jesus, that he will be recognised, adored, obeyed—all the higher moral attributes of his nature shining forth in harmonious and illustrious display. Into the earthly Paradise the Tempter entered; from the heavenly he will be shut out. From the earthly Paradise sad exiles once were driven; from the heavenly we shall go no more out for ever. Still, however, after all such imperfect and unsatisfying comparisons, the questions return upon us, Where, and what is this Paradise of the redeemed? Our simplest and our

best answers to those questions perhaps are these —Where is Paradise? wherever Jesus is. What is Paradise? to be for ever with, and to be fully like our Lord. We know—for God has told us so, of that Paradise of the redeemed—that it is a land of perfect light; the day has dawned there; the shadows have for ever fled away. It is a land of perfect blessedness; no tears fall there; no sighs rise there; up to the measure of its capacity, each spirit filled with a pure, never-ending joy. It is a land of perfect holiness; nothing that defileth shall enter there, neither whatsoever loveth or maketh a lie. But what gives to that land its light, its joy, its holiness in the sight of the redeemed? it is the presence of Jesus. If there be no night there, it is because the Lamb is the light of that place; if there be no tears there, it is because from every eye his hand has wiped off every tear. The holiness that reigneth there, is a holiness caught from the seeing him as he is. And trace the tide of joy that circulates through the hosts of the blessed to its fountain-head, you will find it within that throne on which the Lamb that once was slain is sitting. To be with Jesus, to be

like Jesus, to love and serve him purely, deeply, unfailingly, unfalteringly—that is the Christian's heaven.

I love, says one, to think of heaven; and as I repeat the words, they will find an echo in each Christian heart:—

> "I love to think of heaven; its cloudless light,
> Its tearless joys, its recognitions, and its fellowships
> Of love and joy unending; but when my mind anticipates
> The sight of God incarnate, wearing on his hands
> And feet and side marks of the wounds
> Which he for me on Calvary endured,
> All heaven beside is swallowed up in this;
> And he who was my hope of heaven below
> Becomes the glory of my heaven above."

Yet once again let the memorable words of our Lord be repeated, "To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise." What a day to that dying man! How strange the contrast between its opening and its close, its morning and its night! Its morning saw him a culprit condemned before the bar of earthly judgment; before evening shadowed the Hill of Zion, he stood accepted at the bar of heaven. The morning saw him led out through an earthly city's gates in company with one who was hooted at by the crowd that gathered round him; before night fell upon Jerusalem, the gates of an-

other city, even the heavenly, were lifted up, and he went up through them in company with one around whom all the hosts of heaven were bowing down, as he passed on to take his place beside the Father on his everlasting throne. Humblest believer in the Saviour, a like marvellous contrast is in store for you. This hour, it may be, weak and burdened, tossing on the bed of agony, in that darkened chamber of stifled sobs and drooping tears; the next hour, up and away in the Paradise of God, mingling with the spirits of the just made perfect, renewing death-broken friendships, gazing on the unveiled glories of the Lamb. Be thou then but faithful unto death; struggle on for a few more of those numbered days, or months, or years, and on that day of your departure hence, in his name I have to say it to you, Verily, thou too shalt be with him in Paradise.

IX.

THE MOTHER OF OUR LORD.[1]

THE last sight we got of the disciple whom Jesus loved was when he and Peter entered together into the Hall of the High Priest. Silent and in the shade, he escaped the scrutiny that his rash companion drew upon himself. Of the sad scene that ensued, John was the sorrowful witness. He saw the Lord turn and look upon Peter; he saw Peter turn and leave the hall. It is not likely that he followed him. A stronger attraction kept him where he was. He waited to see what the issue of these strange proceedings should be; waited till he heard the judgment of the Sanhedrim given; waited till he saw the weak and sorely-badgered Governor at last give way; waited perhaps till the preparations for the crucifixion had commenced. Then may he

[1] John xix. 25-27.

have gone in haste into the city; gone to seek out those who, he knew, would be most interested to hear; especially to seek out and to comfort her upon whose wounded heart the burden of these terrible tidings would fall most heavily. Most likely it was from the lips of the beloved disciple that Mary first heard that morning of the fate which awaited Jesus. But where and when did she first see him? Not in the palace of the High Priest; not in the Judgment-Hall of Pilate. Although she had got the tidings soon enough to be there, these were not places for such a visitant. Nor was she one of those daughters of Jerusalem that lamented and bewailed him by the way. The first sight she gets of him is when, mocked by the soldiers, derided by the passers-by, insulted by the Chief Priests, he hangs upon the cross. She has her own sister Mary with her, and that other faithful Mary of Magdala, with John beside them, making up that little group, who, with feelings so different from those of all the others, gaze upon the scene.

The prayer for his crucifiers has been offered. The penitent thief has heard the declaration that

opens to him that day the gates of Paradise, when the eye of the Crucified, wandering over the motley crowd, fixes upon that little group standing, quietly but sadly, near enough to be spoken to. John is addressing some word, or doing some act of kindness to Mary. They are at least so close to one another, that though Jesus names neither, neither can mistake of whom and to whom he speaks, as, bending a tender look upon them, he says, "Woman, behold thy Son!" "Son, behold thy mother!" John acts at once on the direction given, and withdraws Mary from the spot, and takes her to his own home in Jerusalem. Amid the dark and tumultuous, solemn and awful incidents of the crucifixion, this incident has so much of peaceful repose that we feel tempted to dwell upon it. At once, and very naturally, it suggests to us a review of the previous relationship and intercourse between Mary and her mysterious Son. We cannot, indeed, rightly appreciate our Lord's notice of her from the cross without taking it in connexion with that relationship and intercourse.

The angelic annunciation, the salutation of

Elizabeth, the visits of the Bethlehem shepherds and the Eastern Magi, had all prepared Mary to see, in her first-born Son, One greater than the children of men. All those sayings—about his greatness and glory, his being called the Son of the Highest, his sitting upon the throne of David his father, his reigning over the house of Jacob for ever—she kept and pondered in her heart, wondering exceedingly what manner of man that child of hers should be, in whom those sayings should be fulfilled. As she listened to all those prophecies of his future greatness, by which his birth was foretold and celebrated, what bright and glowing anticipations must have filled Mary's heart! One discordant word alone at this time fell upon her ear, one saying differing from all the rest, the meaning of which she could not understand. "This child," said the aged Simeon, as he took up the babe into his arms at his presentation within the Temple,—"this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel, and for a sign that shall be spoken against. Yea," added the aged prophet, as he looked sadly and sympathizingly at Mary, "a sword shall pierce

through thy own soul also." Was it to temper her new-born joy; was it to teach her to mingle some apprehension with her hopes; was it to prepare and fortify her for the actual future that lay before her—so different from the imagined one—that these words were spoken? Beyond exciting a fresh wonder and perplexity, they could, however, have had but little effect on Mary at the time. She did not, she could not understand them then; therefore, with those bright and joyous anticipations still within her heart, she retired to Nazareth. The child grew, the Evangelist tells us, waxed strong in spirit, was filled with wisdom, the grace of God was upon him; but beyond that gentleness which nothing could ruffle, that meekness which nothing could provoke, that wisdom which was daily deepening and widening, giving ever new and more wonderful, yet ever natural and child-like exhibitions of itself, that dutiful submission to his reputed parents, that love to all around him upon earth, that deeper love to his Father in heaven,—beyond that rare and unexampled assemblage of all the virtues and graces by which a human child-

hood could be adorned, there was nothing outwardly to distinguish him from any child of his own age, nothing outwardly to mark him out as the heir of such a glorious destiny.

Twelve years of that childhood pass. Jesus has been to Mary so like what any other son might have been to his mother, that, unconscious of any difference, she assumes and exercises over him all ordinary maternal rights. But now, again, just as it was with that speech of Simeon among the other prophecies that heralded the Redeemer's birth, so is it with an act and speech of Christ himself among the quiet incidents out of which, for thirty years, his life at Nazareth was made up. When twelve years old, they take Jesus up to Jerusalem, the days of the festival are fulfilled, the village company to which Jesus and his family were attached, leave the Holy City on their return. Joseph and Mary never for a moment doubt that, acting with his accustomed wisdom and dutifulness, their son will be with the other youths from Nazareth and its neighbourhood, along with whom he had made the journey up to the Holy City. Not till the usual

resting-place for the night is reached do they miss him. Something must have happened to hinder him from joining the company at Jerusalem. Full of anxiety, Joseph and Mary return into the city. Three days are spent in the sorrowful search. At last they find him, sitting quietly among the doctors, as if the temple were his home. Imagine Mary's feelings at this sight. No accident, then, had happened to him; no restraint had been laid upon him. It had been voluntarily and deliberately that her son had remained thus behind for four days after her departure. Never before had Jesus acted in such a way, never said or done anything fitted to give her pain. Never before had she occasion to reproach or rebuke him, but now, in her surprise and grief, she cannot help speaking to him as she had never done before. "Son," said she, when at last she found him,—"Son, why hast thou dealt thus with us? Thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing." Now, mark the Son's reply when spoken to as if he had been forgetful of the duty that a child owes to his parents. Mary had called him Son; he does not call her Mother; he never

does,—never in any conversation related in the Gospels. Mary had spoken of Joseph as his father; he nowise recognises that relationship. The full consciousness of another, higher Sonship than that to Mary has entered his youthful heart; and, under the inspiration of this consciousness, his only reply to the maternal appeal is, "How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?"—a very strange and altogether unexpected answer; one which, we are distinctly told, neither Mary nor Joseph understood. It offered no explanation or excuse for his conduct. It denied all need for any such explanation or excuse. In the matter of his heavenly Father's business, it repudiated their interference. Mary had never heard her own or Joseph's authority over him questioned by Jesus. Had this visit to Jerusalem weakened in his heart the sense of subjection to them? Was he going to throw it off? Will he refuse to accompany them? Must he still continue to be thus engaged about his Father's business? No! Having said thus much, to teach them that he knew how special his earthly rela-

tionship to them was, he rose, he left the temple, and returning with them to Nazareth, was subject to them as before, yet not without having deposited another seed of wonder in Mary's heart,—wonder as to what that other Father's business was, with her son's mode of doing which she, as his mother, must not interfere.

Jesus is, as before, Mary's dutiful and submissive Son. Joseph dies, and he, who had been sharer of his reputed father's earthly labours, becomes perhaps the chief support and solace of his mother in her widowhood. Eighteen years go past. Jesus leaves his home at Nazareth, alone, for none of his own family believe in him. He presents himself on the banks of the Jordan, and asks baptism at the hands of John. The sign from heaven is given; the voice from heaven is heard; the Baptist points to him as the Lamb of God. Philip hails him as the Messiah promised to the fathers. Nathanael recognises him as the Son of God, the King of Israel. All this is told to Mary. A few weeks later her Son returns, and finds her at the marriage-feast at Cana; returns now with public vouchers of his

Messiahship, and with five followers, who acknowledge him as their Master. Once more, as at his birth, the hopes of Mary's heart rise high. It is at the house of a friend—of a near relative, it has been conjectured—that this marriage-feast is held. The guests, swelled by Christ's disciples, are more numerous than had been anticipated. The wine provided fails. If her Son be indeed that great Prophet who is to appear, might he not take this public opportunity of partially, at least, revealing himself? Might he not interfere to shield this family from discredit? Might he not, with the wine that still remained, do something like to what Elijah had done with the cruse of oil and the barrel of meal? Filled with such hopes, she calls his attention to the deficiency, trusting that he may possibly, in his new character and office, remove it. "She saith to him, They have no wine. Jesus saith to her, Woman, what have I to do with thee? (or, what hast thou to do with me?) mine hour is not yet come." Soften it as we may, relieve it from all that may seem disrespectful, there was discouragement and reproof in this reply. Presuming upon her

motherly relationship, on the privileges that her thirty years of maternal control have given her, Mary ventures to suggest, and she does it in the most delicate manner, what his course of action might be, now that he enters upon the public walk of the great Prophet. Upon all such interference on her part, an instant, gentle, but firm check must be imposed. Mary must be taught the limits of that influence and authority which her earthly relationship to him had hitherto permitted her to exercise. She must be taught that in the new and higher path upon which he was now about to enter, that motherly relationship gave her no place nor right to direct or to control.

Mary felt and acted upon the reproof. She never afterwards, at least that we know of, in any way obtruded herself. In the history of our Lord's three years' ministry, she never once appears in direct intercourse with her Son. She may sometimes have been with him in his many circuits of Galilee, but you will search in vain for her name among the women who accompanied him, and who ministered to him. Between the words spoken to her at Cana, and those addressed to her from the

cross, not another word, addressed by Jesus to his mother, is recorded in the Gospels. True, indeed, he speaks of her; and in such instances what was said seems to have been intended to moderate in the minds of his hearers their estimate of her position, as his mother. From the outskirts of a crowd that had gathered round him as he taught, the message was once sent in to him, "Behold, thy mother and thy brothers stand without, desiring to speak with thee." What they wanted with him, we do not know: it was on no friendly errand that his brothers came; they disliked his public preaching on the hillsides to the multitude; they thought him beside himself. They expected, on this occasion, that so soon as he got their message, he would give up the work in which he was engaged, and come to them,—that he would feel that his mother and they had a claim upon his attention, superior to that of the motley company that was pressing in upon him. It was a case in many respects like that in the Temple, of a competition between two kinds or classes of obligations. Very striking was the way in which Jesus in this instance acted. As soon

as he heard the message, he exclaimed, "Who is my mother or my brethren?" Then, looking around, he stretches forth his hands to his disciples (and it is but rarely that any gesture of our Lord is chronicled in the Gospel story), and said, "Behold my mother and my brethren; for whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother." Another time, as he was speaking with great power and effect, one of his hearers, struck with admiration, broke forth with the exclamation, "Blessed is the womb that bare thee, and the paps that gave thee suck!" "Yea," said Jesus, checking instantly and emphatically that spirit which had prompted the exclamation,—"yea, rather blessed is he that heareth the word of God, and doeth it."

Mary was highly favoured. With Gabriel and with all generations of our race, we are prepared to call her blessed. We are prepared to render all due honour to that relationship in which she stood to the Redeemer of mankind. Among all the earthly distinctions and dignities that could have been bestowed upon a woman, the very

greatest, we believe, was that which was thus conferred on Mary. And to the reverential regard which this relationship demands, we are prepared to add the still higher regard due to her genuine modesty, her simple faith. Nor are we sure but that, in the depth of our recoil from the superstitious reverence that has gathered round her name, we have overlooked and failed to do full justice to the simplicity, the beauty, the retiringness of that piety which makes her among the pious women of the Gospels what John was among the apostles of our Lord. But when asked to worship her, to pray to her as the mother of the Lord, to entreat that she will exert her influence with her Divine Son, is it possible to overlook that treatment which she met with at our Lord's own hands when here upon earth; is it possible to put away from us the thought that, in that very treatment, he was prophetically uttering his own solemn protest against any such idolatrous magnifying of the position and relationship in which it pleased God that she should stand to him? We say this in the spirit of no mere ecclesiastical quarrel with the worship of

the Virgin. We know how soon it was that Paganism mingled its superstitions with the simple worship of the Crucified; and we can well, therefore, understand how, in virtue of all the gentle and sacred associations that linked themselves with her name, her character, her peculiar connexion with Jesus, Mary should have come to be regarded with an idolatrous regard. Nay, further, looking back upon those dark ages when, under the grinding tread of Northern barbarism, the civilisation of Southern Europe was well-nigh obliterated, we can see a beauty, a tenderness, a power in the worship of Mary; in the prayers and the hymns addressed to her, which turned them into a softening and civilizing element. Nay, further still, were we asked, among all the idolatries that have prevailed upon this idol-loving, idol-worshipping world of ours, to say which one of them it was that touched the finest chords of the human heart, awoke the purest and tenderest emotions, had the best and most humanizing effect, we do not know but that we should fix upon this worship of the Virgin. But delivered, as we have been, from the bondage of the

Middle-Age superstitions; with that narrative in our hands which tells us how our Lord himself dealt with Mary; standing as we do, or ought to do, in the full light of that great truth, that "there is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus,"—it cannot but be matter of surprise, that this worship of the Virgin should still prevail in so many of the enlightened countries of Christendom; suggesting the reflection, how slowly it is that the human spirit emancipates itself from any natural, long-continued, and fondly cherished superstition.

Keeping now the whole history of Mary's previous connexion with our Lord before our eye, and especially their intercourse during the three years of his public ministry, let us dwell for a moment or two upon Christ's recognition of her from the cross. This affectionate recognition in his dying agonies, must have been peculiarly grateful to Mary. His departure from Nazareth, to which he seems to have paid only one short visit afterwards; his separation from the members of his own family; his engrossment with the great objects of his public life; the checks he had

imposed upon her interference; the manner in which he had publicly spoken of her; all these must have created something like a feeling of estrangement in Mary's breast, as if he had ceased to be to her all that he once was. How pleasing to her then to learn from that look and speech of kindness, that his love for her remained unchanged. How soothing to her motherly affection to receive this last, this parting token of his undying affection for her! She may banish all her fears, bury all her suspicions; that Son of hers, he loves her still, loves her as he had ever done; he cannot die without assuring her of that love. But it is more than a simple expression of affection that comes here from the Redeemer's lips. There is a thoughtful care for Mary's future earthly comfort, the securing for her the attention of another son, the providing for her the shelter of a new home. The dying Jesus has present to his thoughts the bereaved, the desolate condition in which his death will leave his mother; he will make all the provision he can towards alleviating her distress; silver and gold he has none to give her, but he has what silver and gold could never buy,

—a hold and power over the heart of one who, if he be well described as the disciple whom Jesus loved, might almost as aptly be described as the disciple who loved Jesus. That hold he will now exercise on her behalf. "Woman, behold thy son!" Woman, not mother: he might, upon this occasion, have restrained himself from calling her so, lest the very mention of her relationship to him should mark her out to that unfriendly crowd, and expose her to their ill-treatment. He is but repeating, however, on the cross, the address of the marriage-feast—"Woman, behold thy son!" Mary, perhaps up to that moment, had cherished some hope of his deliverance; but at that word this hope gives way; she is to lose him; he is to be her Son no more; that tie is to be broken, and a new one created in its stead. A better, kinder son than John, Jesus could not have provided; but, alas! Mary feels that he can never fill that Son's place; still there is great kindness in selecting such a substitute.

To John, no name, no epithet is applied; Jesus simply looks at him, and says, "*Behold thy mother!*" John had already been kind to Mary,

was at that moment doing what he could to comfort her, would have cared for her, though no special charge of this kind had been given; but a son's place, that son's place, he could not have felt warranted to assume. Now, however, when Jesus with his dying breath calls upon him to occupy it, he counts it as a high honour conferred upon him. He undertakes the trust, and proceeds to execute it in the promptest and most delicate way. Was he but interpreting aright the look that Jesus gave him, or was he only obeying an impulse of thoughtful, son-like affection in his own breast? However it was, he saw that Mary's strength was failing, that she was unfit for the closing scene; he instantly led her away to his own home in the city. She was not at the cross when the darkness descended; she was not there when the last and bitterest agonies were borne. You search for her in vain among the women who stood afar off beholding to the last. By John's kind act of instant withdrawal, she was saved what she might not have had strength to bear; and though that withdrawal was neither prescribed nor suggested by our Lord himself,

one can well imagine with what a grateful look he would follow that son as he discharged this the first office of his new relationship; how pleased he too would be that a mother's heart was spared the pangs of witnessing that suffering which drew from him the cry, "My God! my God! why hast thou forsaken me?" Mary showed the submissiveness of her disposition in yielding to John's suggestion, and retiring from the cross, and you never see her but once again in the Gospel narrative. Neither at the resurrection nor at the ascension, nor during the forty days that intervened between them, is her name mentioned, or does she appear. The one and only glance we get of her is in the first chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, where her name and that of our Lord's brother, who had come then to believe on him, are mentioned among the hundred and twenty who, after the ascension, continued in prayer and supplication, waiting for the promise of the Spirit.

And now, in conclusion, in that love which in his latest hours Jesus showed to Mary, let us hail the great and perfect example of filial affection he

has left behind him. In that mingling with the broader thoughts of a world's redemption which must then have occupied his thoughts, the thoughtful care for her earthly comfort, let us see the evidence of how essential a part of all true religion it is to provide, as God enables us, for those whom we leave behind us in this world. Let no pretext of other and higher obligations weaken within our breasts the sense of our obligation to discharge this duty before we die.

From our Saviour's treatment of Mary let us learn, too, to put in their right place, to estimate according to their real worth, all earthly, all external distinctions. To be the mother of our Lord, that raised her above all other women,—and we gladly join with all who, upon that ground, would call her blessed; yet would we still more wish to join heart and soul in our Lord's own saying, that "more blessed is he who heareth the word of God, and doeth it." To be the nearest herald, the immediate harbinger of Jesus, that raised John the Baptist above all the prophets, and ranked him among the greatest of the children of men. But yet there is another

connexion with Christ, higher and still more honourable—a connexion in comparison with which the closest of mere external or official bonds sink into absolute insignificance—that inward, that spiritual, that eternal tie which binds the humble, contrite, trustful spirit to the Redeemer. To be the least in his kingdom, to be the least among those who truly love and faithfully obey him, is a more enduring, a more illustrious distinction than to be the highest among those upon whom the honours of this world are heaped. And let us bless God for it, that this, the highest honour to which humanity can be exalted, is one that is within the reach of all. It cometh through humility and faith and love: it cometh through the weight of our sin being felt, the worth of our Redeemer being appreciated. It cometh through our becoming as little children, and yielding ourselves up to those gracious influences of the Divine Spirit, by which alone the proud heart can be humbled, and the doubtful heart be assured, and the unloving heart be brought to love. It cometh through the eye of faith being opened to discern the closeness and the reality of

the unseen world, that world of spirits, whose all-engulfing bosom, when a few more of these numbered years of ours on earth are over, shall have received us all. It cometh from our giving to all that concerns our spiritual state, our spiritual welfare and preparation for futurity, that predominance in our regards, our affections, our lives, to which their inherent, their surpassing worth, entitles them. It springs from our caring less for the honour that cometh from man, and more for that honour which cometh from God only.

Finally, let us realize those relationships to one another established in Christ our Lord, which, in their closeness, their blessedness, their enduringness, so far outmeasure all the other relationships of this human life. Why was John selected to take Christ's place, to be a second son to Mary? Why was Mary so specially committed to his charge? She had other sons, upon whom the duty naturally devolved. They, indeed, as yet were unbelievers; and upon that ground might fitly have been excluded. But were there not two of her own sister's sons among the twelve? Why

pass the sister and the nephews over, and select John to stand to her in this new relationship? It may have been that John was better placed than they, as to outward circumstances abler to provide a home for the bereaved; but can we doubt that another and still weightier consideration determined the Saviour's choice—the spiritual affinity between John and Mary; his capacity to enter into all her sorrows; his power by sympathy to support? And ties kindred to those which bound John and Mary together, do they not still bind together those whose hearts have been taught to beat in unison, and who have been formed to be mutual helps and comforts amid the trials and bereavements of life? Thank God for it, if he has given you any such support as Mary and John found in each other; and rejoice in the belief, that those relationships which are grounded on and spring out of our oneness in Jesus Christ, partake not of the mutability of this earthly scene, but, destined to outlive it, are impressed with the seal of eternity.

X.

THE DARKNESS AND THE DESERTION.[1]

THE full bright sun of an eastern sky has been looking down on what these men are doing who have nailed Jesus to the cross, and are standing mocking and gibing him. The mid-day hour has come; when suddenly there falls a darkness which swallows up the light, and hangs a funereal pall around the cross:—no darkness of an eclipse—that could not be as the moon then stood—no darkness which any natural cause whatever can account for. As we think of it, many questions rise to which no answer can now be given. Did it come slowly on, deepening and deepening till it reached its point of thickest gloom? or was it, as we incline to believe, as instantaneous in its entrance as its exit: at the sixth hour, covering all in a moment with its dark mantle; at the

[1] Mark xv. 33, 34.

ninth hour, in a moment lifting that mantle off? Was it total or partial: a darkness deep as that of moonless, starless midnight, wrapping the cross so thickly round, that not the man who stood the nearest to it could see aught of the sufferer? Or was it the darkness of a hazy twilight obscuring but not wholly concealing, which left the upraised form of the Redeemer dimly visible through the gloom? Was it local and limited, confined to Jerusalem or Judea; or did it spread over the entire enlightened portion of the globe? We cannot tell. We may say of it, and say truly, that it was inanimate nature, supplying, in her mute elements, that sympathy with her suffering Lord which was denied by man. Men gazed rudely on the sight, but the sun refused to look on it, hiding his face for a season. Men would leave the Crucified, exposed in shame and nakedness, to die; but an unseen hand was stretched forth to draw the drapery of darkness around the sufferer, and hide him from vulgar gaze.

But the truest and deepest significance of this darkness is as a type or emblem of the horror

of that great darkness which at this period enveloped the spirit of the Redeemer. The outer incidents, if there were any, of those three hours of darkness, remain untold. We are left only to believe that its sudden descent wrought like a spell upon the actors and spectators; it stopped each wagging head, it silenced each gibing tongue; not a word seems to have been spoken, not a thing done; there they stood, or there they lay, with that spell upon them, wondering what this darkness meant. We can easily enough imagine what *they* may have fancied or felt during that strange period of suspense; but who can imagine what He was thinking, how He, the Saviour, was feeling in that dread and awful interval? No eye perhaps may have pierced the outer darkness that shrouded his suffering body; still less may any human eye penetrate that deeper darkness which shrouded his suffering soul. We are left here without a single external index; not a look, a word, an act, to tell us what was going on within the Redeemer's spirit,—till the ninth hour came, the moment which preceded the rolling away of the darkness, and the return of the clear

shining of the day, and then the only sound that strikes the ear is the agonizing cry—"My God, my God! why hast thou forsaken me?"—a cry wrung, as it were, from the sufferer's lips, when the severe agony of his soul has reached its last, its culminating, its closing point; a cry which, revealing somewhat of the interior of the burdened heart from which it springs, leaves still more unrevealed; a cry which, after we have listened to it, and pondered it, and turned it over and over again in our thoughts, seems to grow darker instead of brighter to our eye, and of which we become at last convinced that it was the simple, spontaneous, irrepressible outcry of a spirit tried to the last limit of endurance; the expression of what must for ever remain to us an indescribable, unfathomable, unimaginable woe.

It would strip, indeed, this cry of the suffering Saviour of all difficulty and mystery, could we look upon him as a man, and nothing more; could we look upon him in dying as subject to the same mental and spiritual, as well as bodily weakness with any of ourselves; could we be-

lieve that such doubts and fears as have eclipsed the faith, and darkened for a time the hopes of other dying men, had place within his breast; could we interpret this saying as the utterance of a momentary despondency, a transient despair. We are disposed to go the utmost length in attributing to the humanity of our Lord all the sinless frailties of our nature; and had we seen him struggling in agony through the tedious death-throes of dissolution, the sinking body drawing the sinking spirit down along with it, and draining it of all its strength,—had it been from a spirit enfeebled to the uttermost, its very powers of thought and apprehension, of faith and feeling, fainting, failing, that this sad lament proceeded, we can scarcely tell whether or not it would have been inconsistent with a right estimate of the humanity of Jesus to attribute to him such a momentary oppression under doubt and fear as should have forced this exclamation from his lips, prompted by his obscured perception of his personal relationship with the Father.

It stands, however, in the way of our receiving any such interpretation of this saying, that it

came from one whose intellect was so clear and unclouded that the moment after it was uttered he could reflect on all he had to say or do in order that the Scripture might be fulfilled, and whose bodily powers were so far from being reduced to the last extremity of weakness, that it was "with a loud voice," betokening a vigour as yet unexhausted, that he uttered the despairing cry.

Besides, we have only to look back upon the few days that preceded the crucifixion, to find evidence that there mingled with the sufferings which Christ endured upon the cross an element altogether different from the common pains of dying. On one of the last days of his teaching in the temple, certain Greeks desired to see him. Their earnest request sounded to his prophetic ear like the entreaty of the entire Gentile world. It threw him into a sublime reverie of thought. Bright visions of a distant future, when all men should be drawn unto him, rose before his eye; but with them the vision of a future even then at hand,—of his being lifted up upon the cross. A sudden change comes over his spirit. He ceases to think of, to speak with man. His eye closes

upon the crowd that stands around. He is alone with the Father. A dark cloud wraps his spirit. He fears as he enters it. From the bosom of the darkness there comes an agitated voice: "Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify thy name;"—some deep, inward trouble of the heart, a shrinking from it, a cry for deliverance, a meek submission to the Divine will. You have all these repeated in order, and with greater intensity in the Garden of Gethsemane: "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death. O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt." Here, once more, there is the agony, the shrinking, the petition, the acquiescence.

What so troubled Jesus in the Temple? what threw him into that bloody sweat in the Garden? what drew from him these strong cryings for deliverance? Can any one believe that it was the mere prospect of dying upon a cross which thus shook his spirit to the very centre? To believe so, were to degrade him beneath a level to which

multitudes of his followers have risen. Deaths far more formidable, more protracted, more excruciating, they have contemplated beforehand with unruffled composure, and endured with unshrinking fortitude. Shall the disciple be greater than the master? No; there was something more in that hour for which Jesus came into this world, something more in that cup which he took into his trembling hands, than the mere bitterness of apprehended dissolution. He has himself taught us, by the language which he employed, to identify the hour and the cup. He has taught us, too, that this hour was on him in the Temple; this cup was there raised by him to his lips. The same hour was on him in the Garden; of the same cup he there drank large and bitter draughts. It was that same hour which came upon him on the cross, to run out its course during the supernatural darkness; it was that same cup which he took once more into his hands, to drain to the very dregs. Here also, as in the Temple, in the Garden, you have the same features, — the conflict, the recoil, the victory. Perhaps the inward trouble and agony of his soul

reached a somewhat higher pitch on Calvary than in Gethsemane: that bitter cry—"My God, my God! why hast thou forsaken me?"—sounds to our ear as coming from a profounder depth of woe than any into which Jesus had ever sunk before; but in source and in character the sorrow of the Saviour's spirit was in each of the three instances the same—a purely mental or spiritual grief, unconnected in two of these cases with any bodily endurance, and, in the third, carefully to be distinguished from those pains of dissolution with which it mingled.

Whence did that grief arise? what were its elements? how came it to be so accumulated and condensed, and to exert such a pressure upon the spirit of our Redeemer, as to force from him those prayers in the Garden, this exclamation on the cross? It was because he stood as our great Head and Representative, and suffered in our room and stead: "He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities;" he made "his soul an offering for sin;" "he died the just for the unjust, to bring us to God." The testimony of the Scriptures to the vicarious, sacri-

ficial, atoning character of the sufferings and death of Christ, is clear, emphatic, multiform, and unambiguous. But when we go beyond the simple statements of the Inspired Record, and, admitting the great fact of the Atonement, inquire into the how and the wherefore of that fact,—resolved to accept implicitly all that the Scriptures teach, but equally resolved not to go beyond its teaching, nor add any theories of our own to its simple and impressive lessons,—we feel ourselves on the borders of a region, too remote, too mysterious, for eyes like ours fully and accurately to survey.

Let us, however, that we may catch a distant sight of one inner fountain of our Redeemer's sufferings, approach it by a path which, for some distance at least, is not obscure. It is said in Scripture that Christ bore our sins in his own body on the tree ; it is said, also, that he bore our griefs, and carried our sorrows. Our griefs he bore by sympathy; our sorrows he carried by entering into them and making them his own. That central heart of love and pity opened itself, at every point, to all the forms and varieties of human woe. Its sympathy stood free from all those

restraints that lie upon ours. Our ignorance, our selfishness, our coldness, our incapacity for more than a few intense affections, narrow and weaken the sympathy we feel. But he knows all, can feel for all; so that not a pang of grief wrings any human bosom but sends an answering thrill through the loving, pitying heart of our Divine Redeemer Human sympathy, too, deepens, takes a peculiar character, a peculiar tenderness, according to the closeness and dearness of the tie which binds us to the sufferer. A mother's fellow-feeling with a suffering child is something very different from what any stranger can experience. And it is not simply as one of us, as a brother man, that Jesus feels for us in our sorrows. It is as one who has linked himself to our race, or rather has linked our race to him by a tie the nature and force of which we are little capable of understanding. Only we may say, that parent was never bound to child, nor child to parent, in a bond so close as that which binds Jesus Christ and those whom he came to redeem. It would need his own omniscience to fathom the depth and intensity imparted to his sympathy by the

peculiarity of that relationship in which it has pleased him to place himself to his own.

Now, Christ's is as much the central conscience as the central heart of humanity. Conceive him entering into a connexion with human sin, kindred to that into which he enters with human sorrow, realizing to himself, as he only could, its extent, its inveteracy, its malignity: in this way taking on him all our sins, and letting the full impression of their inherent turpitude, their ruinous results, fall upon his spirit,—who shall calculate for us the bulk and weight of that burden which might thus come to be borne by him? Once, in a Jewish synagogue, he looked round upon a small company of men, and he was grieved because of the hardness of their hearts. Let us imagine that grief amplified and intensified to the uttermost by our Lord's taking upon himself the sin of the world. Let all the hardness of all men's hearts, all the hard speeches that ungodly sinners have spoken, the ungodly deeds they have done; let all the impurity, and injustice, and cruelty, and profanity, and impiety which have been perpetrated under these heavens—of which the enmity

and malignity which nailed him to the cross might be taken as a specimen and index; let all that vast accumulation of human iniquity be conceived of as present to the Redeemer's thoughts, appropriated and realized by him as the iniquity of those to whom he had linked himself by a bond of closest fellowship, of undying, unquenchable love; let all the sins of that world he came to save gather in and press down upon the pure and holy and loving spirit of the man Christ Jesus:—Do we not get a dim and distant sight of a fountain of woe thus opened within, sufficient to send forth waters of bitterness which might wellnigh overwhelm his soul, putting his capacity to suffer to an extreme trial?

Further still, may we not imagine that as he made thus the sins of our sinful world his own, and thought and dwelt upon that holiness of God, upon which they were such terrible invasions; the wrath of the Holy One, which they had so thoroughly deserved, and so deeply had provoked; the separation from God, the banishment from his presence, the death they did so righteously entail;—that, in the very fulness of that love and

sympathy which made him identify himself with us men for our salvation, the horror of such a darkness settled over the mind of the Redeemer that the face even of his heavenly Father for a moment seemed obscured, that its smile seemed changed into a frown, that the momentary apprehension seized him that in himself that death, that separation from the Father, was about to be realized, so that from his oppressed, bewildered, faltering manhood, there came forth the cry, "My God, my God! why hast thou forsaken me?"

Let us not forget that there was not, indeed could not be—the nature of the connexion forbade it—any absolute or entire desertion of the Son by the Father. "Therefore," said Jesus, "doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life for the sheep." Could that love be withdrawn from Jesus when he was in the very act of laying down his life? "This," said the Father, "is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Was there ever a time at which he was more pleased with him than when he was offering himself up in that sacrifice so acceptable to God? Nor does the Son ever entirely lose his

hold of the Father. Even in this moment of amazement and oppression it is still to God, as *his* God, that he speaks: "*My* God! *my* God! why hast thou forsaken me?" It was the sensible comfort only of the Divine presence and favour which were for the time withdrawn; the felt inflowings of the Divine love which were for the time checked. But what a time of agony must that have been to him who knew, as none other could, what it was to bask in the light of his Father's countenance; who felt, as none other could, that his favour indeed was life! On us,—so little do we know or feel what it is to be forsaken by God,—the thought of it, or sense of it, may make but a slight impression, produce but little heartfelt misery; but to him it was the consummation and the concentration of all woe, beyond which there was and could be no deeper anguish for the soul.

I have thus presented to you but a single side, as it were, of that sorrow unto death which rent the bosom of the Redeemer, as he was offering himself a sacrifice for us upon the cross. Perhaps it is the side which lies nearest to us, and is most

open to our comprehension. Certainly it is one the looking at which believingly is fitted to tell powerfully on our consciences and hearts — to make us feel the exceeding sinfulness of our sin, and set us hopefully and trustfully to struggle with the temptations that beset our path.

In a household which enjoyed all the benefits of high culture and Christian care, one of the children committed a grievous and unexpected fault—he told a falsehood to cover a petty theft; rebuke and punishment were administered, carried farther than they had ever been before, but without effect. The offender was not awakened to any real or deep sorrow for his offence. The boy's insensibility quite overcame his father. Sitting in the same room with his obstinate and sullen child, he bent his head upon his hands, and, sobbing, burst into a flood of tears. For a moment or two the boy looked on in wonder; he then crept gradually nearer and nearer to his sobbing parent, and at last got up upon his father's knees, asking, in a low whisper, why it was that he was weeping so. He was told the reason. It wrought like a spell upon his young heart; the

sight of his father suffering so bitterly on his account was more than he could bear. He flung his little arms around his father, and wept along with him. That father never needed to correct his child again for any like offence. And surely, if, in that great sorrow which overwhelmed the spirit of our Redeemer on the cross, there mingled, as one of its ingredients, a grief like, in origin and character, to that which wrung this father's heart, and melted his child to penitence, the sight and thought of it ought to exert a kindred power over those for whom Jesus died.

A younger son is guilty of a great offence against his father. His elder brother, in acting the part of a mediator between the offending child and his offended parent, might voluntarily submit to the exact and the full punishment which his younger brother had deserved,—by doing so might turn away the father's wrath, and earn the title to a brother's gratitude. But what if the offender sees his elder brother, at the pure and simple impulse of love, melted into a profound and heart-breaking grief, yearning over him, weeping over him, taking on himself a suffering far more

acute than that which the lash of parental discipline might righteously have inflicted on the offender, would not the sight of the pain that his conduct had given one who loved him so tenderly, tell most powerfully in the way of quickening him to a sense of his wrong-doing? Transfer this to our Elder Brother, the Mediator with our offended Father in heaven. The exact punishment which our sin entails—remorse, despair, the sting of a torturing conscience, the felt abiding misery of a soul cut off from the Divine favour—Jesus could not literally bear. He has, indeed, borne that for us which has satisfied the Divine justice, and been accepted as a full and adequate atonement for our transgression; but may it not have been that the suffering in our room and stead, which was accepted of the Father, was part of the suffering which our great sin and his great love drew down on *him*, who, by linking himself to us by the tie of a common humanity, laid a brother's heart open to such a sorrow for our sin as none but the Eternal Son of the Father could have endured? Surely, in the consideration that it was in such kind of suffering with

and for our sins that the great Atonement of the cross, in a measure at least, consisted, there is one of the most direct and powerful of appeals, —one singularly fitted to touch, to soften, to subdue.

I am very conscious how little anything which has as yet been said is fitted to throw full or satisfactory light upon that most mysterious of all the mysterious sayings of our Lord—the plaintive, lonely, loud, and bitter cry which emanated from the cross, which, piercing the overhanging darkness, was heard with wonder in the heavens. It came out of the depth of an anguish that we have no plummet in our hand to sound; and we become only the more conscious how unfathomable that depth is, by trying it here and there with the line of our short-reaching intellect. Instead of hoping to find the bottom anywhere, let us pause upon the brink; adoring, wondering, praising that great love of our most gracious Saviour, which has a height and a depth, a length and a breadth in it, surpassing all human, all angelic measurement :—

" Oh, never, never canst thou know
What then for thee the Saviour bore,
The pangs of that mysterious woe
Which wrung his bosom's inmost core.
Yes, man for man perchance may brave
The horrors of the yawning grave ;
And friend for friend, or son for sire,
Undaunted and unmoved expire,
From love, or piety, or pride ;
But who can die as Jesus died ?"

XI.

"IT IS FINISHED."[1]

WITH the arrival of the ninth hour, the outer darkness cleared away, and with it too the horrors of that inner darkness from whose troubled bosom the cry at last came forth, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" That mental agony, one of whose ingredients—perhaps to us the most intelligible—I endeavoured last Sunday to describe, had been endured. The hour for which he came into the world has run its course; the cup which with such a trembling hand he had put to shrinking lips, has been drunk to its dregs; the powers of darkness have made on him their last assault, and been repelled; the momentary darkness of his Father's countenance has passed away. As the sun of nature dispels

[1] Matt. xxvii. 47-50; Mark xv. 35-37; Luke xxiii. 46; John xix. 28-30.

the gloom that for these three hours had hung around the scene, and sheds once more his illuminating beams upon the cross; even so the light of an answering inward joy comes to cheer in death the spirit of our Redeemer. It is not in darkness, whether outward or inward,—not in darkness, but in light, in full, clear, unclouded light that Jesus dies.

The first, however, and immediate effect of the lifting from his oppressed and burdened heart that load of inward grief which had been laid upon it, was a reviving consciousness of his bodily condition, the awakening of the sensation of a burning thirst. Let the spirit be thoroughly absorbed by any very strong emotion, and the bodily sensations are for the time unfelt or overborne, they fail to attract notice; but let the tide of that overwhelming emotion retreat, and these sensations once more exert their power. In the shock of battle, the excited combatant may receive his death-wound, and be unconscious of pain. It is when they lay him down in quiet to die, that exhausted nature betrays a sense of suffering. So is it, after a manner, here with

Christ. His lips scarce feel their parchedness as they utter the cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Too full, too agitated, is the soul within, to be keenly alive to bodily sensations. But now that the relief from inward agony has come, the cravings of nature return, and first among these the strong desire for something to alleviate the thirst. This thirst, however, so far from entirely engrossing his thoughts, serves but to suggest to the dying Saviour—and this shows, as we before remarked, how clear and calm and self-possessed he was to the very last—that among all the numerous prophecies which had spoken of the time and manner of his decease, of his being numbered with transgressors, of the shaking of heads, and the shooting out of tongues, the parting of his garments, the casting lots for his vesture, there still was one[1] about their giving him in his thirst vinegar to drink, which remained to be fulfilled. As being, then, at once the natural expression of the feeling of the moment, and the means of bringing about the fulfilment of that prophecy, "Jesus said, I *thirst*."

[1] See Psalm lxix.

In saying so, he made an appeal to the sympathy of his crucifiers, in the belief that they would offer him some of that sour wine, or vinegar which was the ordinary drink of the Roman soldiers. Did Jesus know how that appeal would be met and answered? We cannot but believe he did; and, if so, it stands out as at once the last act in point of time, and one of the lowest in point of degree, of that humiliation before men to which it pleased him to stoop, that he addressed himself as a petitioner to those who treated his petition as they did. Let us try to realize what happened around the cross, immediately after the departure of the three hours' darkness. One might have expected that the natural awe which that darkness had undoubtedly inspired; the moaning cry, as from one deserted, that came from the cross, as it was rolling away; the fresh sight of Jesus, upon whose pallid features there lingered the traces of his terrible agony; and, last of all, his asking of them to drink,—would have conspired to awaken pity, or at least to silence scorn. The coming back, however, of the light—relieving, perhaps, a dread they

might have felt that in the darkness Jesus should escape or be delivered—seems to have rekindled that fiendish malignity which now found a last and most demoniac way of expressing itself. "Eli! Eli!"—no Jew could possibly misunderstand the words, or imagine that they were a call to Elias for help. The Roman soldiers did not know enough about Elias to have fallen on any such interpretation. That the words were taken up, played upon by the bystanders, and turned into a new instrument of mockery, shows to what a fiendish length of heartless, pitiless contempt and scorn such passions as those of these Scribes and Pharisees, if unrestrained, will go. One, indeed, of those around the cross appears to have been touched with momentary pity, perhaps a Roman soldier, who, when he heard Jesus say, "I thirst," and looked upon his pale, parched lips, ran and took a stalk of hyssop. From what we know of the size of the plant, this stalk could not have been much above two feet long, but it was long enough to reach the lips of Jesus, the feet of a person crucified not being ordinarily elevated more than a foot or two above the

ground. This circumstance explains to us how close to the crucified the soldiers must have stood; how near many of the outstanding crowd may have been; how natural and easy it was for Jesus to speak to Mary and John as he did. To that stalk of hyssop the man attached a sponge, and, dipping it in the vessel of vinegar, that stood at hand, was putting it to the Saviour's lips, when the mocking crowd cried out, "Let be; let us see whether Elias will come to save him." This did not stop him from giving Jesus, in his thirst, vinegar to drink. The ancient prophecy he must unconsciously fulfil; but it did serve to half-extinguish the prompting upon which he had begun to act, and induce him to take up into his own lips, and to repeat, the current mockery, "Let us see whether Elias will come to take him down."

When Jesus had received the vinegar, he said, "*It is finished!*" It does not fall in with the character or purpose of these Lectures, intended to be as purely as possible expository, to take up this memorable expression of our dying Lord,

and use it as a text out of which a full exposition of the doctrine of the Cross might be derived. Rather, as being more in accordance with our present design, let us endeavour to conceive of, and to enter into, as far as it is possible, the spirit and meaning of the expression as employed by our Lord upon the cross.

First, then, as coming at this time from the Saviour's lips, it betokens an inward and deep sensation of relief, repose; relief from a heavy burden; repose after a toilsome labour. To the bearing of that burden, the endurance of that toil, Jesus had long and anxiously looked forward. From that time, if time it may be called, when he undertook the high office of the Mediatorship,—from the beginning, even from everlasting, through the vista of the future, the cross of his last agony had risen up before his all-seeing eye, as the object towards which, notwithstanding the dark shadows cast before it, the thought of his spirit stretched forward. In what manner and with what feeling it was regarded by him in the period which preceded his incarnation, it becomes us not to speak, as we have no means of

judging; but we can mark how he felt regarding it after he became a man.

In the earlier period of his ministry, Christ practised a strict reserve in speaking of his death. In spite, however, of that self-imposed restraint, broken hints were ever and anon dropping from his lips, sounding quite strange and enigmatical in the ears to which they were addressed. "I have a baptism," said he to his disciples, "to be baptized with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!" When, near the end of his ministry, the necessity for reserve was removed, Jesus spoke openly about his coming death, and always in such a way as to convey the very deepest impression of the profound interest with which he himself contemplated beforehand that great event. So eagerly did he look forward to it, so striking an influence had that prospect even upon his outward aspect and movements, that when, for the last time, he set his face to go up to Jerusalem, and all the things that were to happen to him there came rushing into his mind, he "went before" the twelve, as if impatient to get forward. They were amazed, we are told, as he

did so; and as they followed him, and gazed upon him, *they were afraid.* The reason of this rapid gait and strange expression he revealed, when he took them apart by the way, and told them what his thoughts had been dwelling on. There was but one occasion on which he could freely and intelligibly speak out the sentiments of his heart: it was when he stood with Moses and Elias on the mount, and there, even when invested with the glories of transfiguration, the decease which he was to accomplish at Jerusalem was the one chosen topic of discourse. As the time drew near, still oftener was that great decease before his thoughts; still heavier did its impending weight appear to press upon his spirit. It was not, it could not be any mere ordinary human death that so occupied the thoughts of Jesus Christ. We endeavoured in our last Lecture to make it apparent to you that the true, the real sufferings of that death lay in another, far deeper region than that to which the ordinary pangs of bodily dissolution belong; and we cannot but believe that that internal conflict, that inner agony of soul, reserved for the last days

and hours of our Redeemer's life, was broken, as it were, into parts, distributed between the Temple, the Garden, the Cross, for the very purpose of making it palpable, even to the eye of the ordinary observer, that the sufferings of the Redeemer's soul formed, as has been well said, the very soul of his sufferings. And when those mysterious sufferings, so long looked forward to, at last were over, the load borne and lifted off, with what a deep, inward feeling of relief, repose, must Jesus have said, "It is finished!"

Secondly, Connecting this expression with what went so immediately before—our Lord's remembrance of all that was needful to be done to him and by him in dying, in order that the Scriptures might be fulfilled—it may reasonably be assumed that he meant thereby to declare the final close and completion of that long series of types and prophecies of his death which crowd the pages of the Old Testament Scriptures. In the very number and variety of these types and prophecies, another attestation meets our eye to the pre-eminent importance of that event to which they point. If you take the twenty-four hours which

embrace the last night and day of the Redeemer's life, you will find that more frequent and more minute pre-intimations of what occurred throughout their course are to be found in the prophetic pages, than of what happened in any other equal period in the history of our globe. The seemingly trifling character of some of the incidents which are made the subjects of prophecy at first surprises us; but that surprise changes into wonder as we perceive that they fix our attention upon the death of Jesus Christ, as the central incident of this world's strange history, the one around which the whole spiritual government of this earth revolves. By all those promises and prophecies, those typical persons and typical events and typical services,—the raising of the altar, the slaying of the sacrifice, the institution of the priesthood, the ark with its broken tables and sprinkled mercy-seat, the Passover, the great day of atonement, the passage of the High Priest within the veil;—by the voice of God himself speaking, in the first promise, about the seed of the woman, and the bruising of his heel; by the wonderful Psalms of David, in which the general

description of the suffering righteous man passes into those minute details which were embodied in the Crucifixion; by those rapt utterances of Isaiah, some portions of which read now more like histories of the past than intimations of the future,—the eye of this world's hope was turned to that event beforehand, as backward to it the eye of the world's faith has ever since been directed.

But, Thirdly, that we may make our way into the very heart of its meaning, does not the expression, "It is finished," suggest the idea of a prescribed, a distinct, a definite work, brought to a final, satisfactory, and triumphant conclusion? Spoken in no boastful spirit, it is the language of one who, having had a great commission given him, a great task assigned, announces that the commission has been executed, the task fulfilled. Taking it as the simple announcement of the fact, that some great transaction was brought to its consummation, we ask ourselves, as we contemplate the entire circle of the Redeemer's services to our race, still running out their course, what part of these services was

it of which it could be said that it was then finished? Here, in the foreground, we have to put that one and perfect sacrifice which he offered up for the sin of the world. Through the Eternal Spirit, he offered himself without spot to God, and by that one sacrifice for sin, once for all, he hath perfected for ever those that are sanctified; he hath done all that was needed to atone for human guilt, to redeem us from the curse of the law, to finish transgression, to make an end of sin, to make reconciliation for iniquity.

But again, Christ's death upon the cross brought to a close that obedience to the Divine law, that perfect fulfilment of all the righteousness which it required; held out to us as the ground upon which we are to find immediate and full acceptance with our Maker. "As by one man's disobedience many were made sinners; so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous." "He made him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God: being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ

Jesus; whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past; to declare, I say, at this time his righteousness; that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus."

Further still—though embraced indeed in the two particulars of the sufferings and services of the Redeemer already mentioned—there was finished upon the cross the new, the full, the wonderful revelation of the Father, that unbosoming of the Eternal, the opening up to us of the very heart of the Godhead, the exhibition of the mingled love and holiness of our Father who is in heaven. There was completed then that glorious, that attractive, that subduing manifestation of the love of God for sinful men, which carried the Divine Being to the extreme length of suffering and of self-sacrifice, and which has ever formed the most powerful of all instruments for pacifying the conscience, melting the heart, moulding the character, renewing and sanctifying the will.

Whether, then, he looked up to God, and

thought of his having glorified his name, finished the work that had been given him to do; or whether he looked down to man, and thought of the saving power which his cross was to exert over millions upon millions of the human family, it may well have been to Jesus Christ a moment of intensest joy, when—his latest pang endured, his last service rendered, his strictly vicarious work completed—he exclaimed, "It is finished!"

To Jesus Christ alone was given that joy in dying which springs from the knowledge that all the ends of living and dying had been perfectly answered. Looking upon the career he had pursued, he could see not a single blot nor blank space in the whole. Of what other man, cut off as he was in the midst of his years, could the same be said? When good and great men die in the full flush of their manhood, the full vigour of their powers, we are apt to mourn the untimely stroke that has laid them low, that has cut short so many of the undertakings they were engaged in, deprived the world of so much service that it was in their heart to have rendered. Nor can any such look back upon the past without this

humbling feeling in the retrospect, that many an offence has been committed, many a duty left imperfectly discharged. But for us there is no place for mourning, as we contemplate the death of our Redeemer, which came to close the one and only life which, stainless throughout its every hour, did so thoroughly and to the last degree of the Divine requirement accomplish all that had been intended. And for him it was as if the cup of bitterness having been drunk, the cry of agony as he drained the last drop of it having been uttered, there was given to him, even before he died, to taste a single drop of that other cup—that cup of full ecstatic bliss, which the contemplation of the travail of his soul, of the glory it rendered to the Father, the good it did to man, shall never cease to yield.

But to what practical use are we to turn this declaration of our dying Saviour? He rested complacently, gratefully, exultingly, in the thought that his work for us was finished. Shall we not try to enter into the full meaning of this great saying? Shall we not try, in the way in which it becomes us, to enter with him into that same

rest? For the forgiveness, then, of all our sins, for our acceptance with a holy and righteous God, let us put our sole, immediate, and entire trust upon this finished work of our Redeemer; let us believe, that whatever obstacles our guilt threw in the way of our being received back into the Divine favour, have been removed; that whatever the holiness of the lawgiver, and the integrity of his law, and the moral interests of his government required in the way of atonement or expiation, has been rendered. Let us look upon the way of access to God as lying quite open to us; let us take the pardon; let us enter into peace with God; let us bring all our guilt and bury it in the depths of his atonement. Let us lay hold of the righteousness of Christ, and clothe ourselves with it in the Divine presence; and regarding the reconciliation with God, effected by the death of his dear Son, as only the first step or stage of the Christian salvation, let us throw open our whole mind and heart to the blessed influences that Christ's love, his life, his sufferings, his death, his entire example were intended to exert in making us less selfish, more loving, more

dutiful, more thankful, more submissive, more holy.

There still remain, for one or two brief remarks, these last words of our Redeemer,—"Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit." The words are borrowed from one of the Psalms. Jesus dies with a passage of the old Hebrew Scriptures on his lips, only he prefaces the words by the epithet so familiar to his lips and heart, "Father." In the depth of his bitter anguish, under the darkness of momentary desolation, he had dropped this phrase. It had been then, "My God, my God!" But now, once more, in the light that shines within, around, he resumes it, and he says, "Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit." If the saying which went before, "It is finished," be taken, as it well may be, as Christ's last word of farewell to the world he leaves behind, this may be taken as his first word of greeting to the new world that he is about to enter. *New* world, we say, for though, as the Eternal Son, he was but returning to the glory that he had with the Father before the world was, let us not forget that death was to the humanity of the Lord,—as it will be to each and all of

us,—an entrance upon a new and untried state. It seems to us as if, in these last words of our Elder Brother, it was that nature of ours he wore which breathed itself forth in our hearing; that human nature which, when the hour of departure comes, looks out with trembling solicitude into the world of spirits, seeking for some one there into whose hands the departing spirit may confidently commit itself. In the "It is finished," the voice of the great High Priest, the Eternal Son of the Father, predominates. In the "Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit," is it not the voice of the man Christ Jesus that mainly salutes our ear? 'No timidity, indeed, nor fear, nor any such trembling awe as any of us might fitly feel in dying. Nothing of these; not a shadow of them here; yet certainly solemnity, concern, the sense as of a need of some support, some upbearing hand. And shall we not thank our Saviour, that not only has he made the passage before us, and opened for us, in doing so, the gate to eternal life, but taught us, by his own example, not to wonder if our weak human nature, as it stands upon the brink, should look out with an eager solicitude to

find the hands into which, in making the great transition, it may throw itself?

And where shall *we* find those hands? He found them in the hands of that Father, who at all times had been so well pleased with him. We find them in *his* hands who went thus before us to his Father and our Father, to his God and our God. He too found them there who has left us the earliest example how a true Christian may and ought to die. Considering the small number of the Lord's disciples, we may believe that Stephen was not only the first of the Christian martyrs, but actually the first after the crucifixion who fell asleep in Jesus. Can we doubt that in dying the last words of Jesus were in Stephen's memory? There had been too many points of resemblance between his own and his Master's trial and condemnation, for Stephen not to have the close of the Redeemer's life before his mind. His dying prayer is an echo of that which came from his Master's lips; the same, yet changed. It might do for the sinless one to say, "Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit." It is not for the sinful to take up at once and appropriate such

words; so, turning to Jesus, the dying martyr says, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit," in that simple, fervent, confiding petition, leaving behind him, for all ages, the pattern of a sinner's dying prayer, modelled upon the last words of the dying Saviour.

XII.

THE ATTENDANT MIRACLES.[1]

In all its outward form and circumstance, there scarcely could have been a lowlier entrance into this world of ours than that made by Jesus Christ. The poorest wandering gipsy's child has seldom had a meaner birth. There was no room for Mary in the inn. She brought forth her first-born son amid the beasts of the stall, and she laid him in a manger. But was that birth—which, though it had so little about it to draw the notice of man, was yet the greatest that this earth has ever witnessed—to pass by without any token of its greatness given? No; other eyes than those of men were fixed on it, and other tongues were loosed to celebrate it. The glory of the Lord shone around the shepherds, and the

[1] Matt. xxvii. 51-54; Mark xv. 39; Luke xxiii. 47-49; John xix. 31-37.

multitude of the heavenly host, borrowing for a time the speech of Canaan, filled the midnight sky with their praises as they chanted, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men." Never was there a lowlier cradle than that in which the new-born Redeemer lay; but over what other cradle was there ever such a birth-hymn sung?

And as with the birth, so also with the death of Jesus. In all its outward form and circumstance, a more humiliating death than that of being crucified as one of three convicted felons, he could not have died. There was no darker, more degrading passage through which he could have been sent forth from among the living. But was that death of the Eternal Son of God to have no outward marks of its importance imprinted on it? Left to man, there had been none; but Heaven will not let it pass unsignalized. And so, at mid-day the darkness came and settled for three hours around the cross; and when at the ninth hour Jesus gave up the ghost, the veil of the Temple was torn in twain from the top to the bottom, and the rocks rent, and the graves

opened. These were the external seals which the hand of the Omnipotent stamped upon the event, proclaiming its importance. But these seals were also symbols; they were more than mere preternatural indications that this was no common death. Each in its way told something about the character and object of this death. The mystery of those hidden sufferings of the Redeemer's spirit,—the inner darkening of the light of his Father's countenance,—stood shadowed forth in the three hours' darkness. The rending of the veil had a meaning of its own, which it scarcely needed an apostle to interpret. To the few eyes that witnessed it, it must have been a most mysterious spectacle. Jesus died at the third hour after mid-day; the very hour when eager crowds of worshippers would be thronging into the courts of the Temple, and all would be preparing for the evening sacrifice. Within the Holy Place, kindling perhaps the many lights of the golden candlestick, some priests would be busy before the inner veil which hung between them and the Holy of Holies; that veil no thin, old, time-worn piece of faded drapery, but fresh,

and strong, and thickly woven, for they renewed it year by year; that Holy of Holies—the dark, secluded apartment within which lay the ark of the covenant, with the cherubim above it shadowing the mercy-seat, which no mortal footstep was permitted to invade, save that of the High Priest once only every year. How strange, how awful to the ministering priests, standing before that veil, to feel the earth tremble beneath their feet, and to see the strong veil grasped, as if by two unseen hands of superhuman strength, and torn down in the middle from top to bottom,—the glaring light of day, that never, for long centuries gone by, had entered there, flung into that sacred tenement, and all its mysteries laid open to vulgar gaze. The Holy Ghost by all this signified that while as yet that first tabernacle was standing, the way into the holiest, the access to God, was not yet made manifest; but now, Christ being come, to offer himself without spot to God, neither by the blood of goats nor calves, but by his own blood, to enter into the true Holy of Holies,—even as he died on Calvary that veil was rent asunder thus within the Temple

to teach us that a new and living way, open to all, accessible to all, had been consecrated for us through the rending of the Redeemer's flesh, that we might have boldness to enter into the holiest, and might draw near, each one of us, to God, with a new heart and in full assurance of faith. Little of all this may those few priests have known who stood that day, gazing with awe-struck wonder upon that working of the Divine and unseen hand,—to them a sign of terror, rather than a symbol of what the death on Calvary had done. We read, however, that not long afterwards—within a year—many priests became obedient unto the faith; and it pleases us to think that among those who, from the inner heart of Judaism, from the stronghold of its priestly caste, were converted unto Christ, some of them may have been numbered whose first movement in that direction was given them as they witnessed that rending of the veil, that laying OPEN of the Most Holy Place.

"And the earth did quake: and the rocks rent; and the graves were opened"—the main office, let us believe, of that earthquake which accompanied,

or immediately followed upon the death of Christ, —not to strike terror into the hearts of men; not to herald judgments upon this earth; not to swallow up the living in its opening jaws; no, but to shake the domains of death; to break the stony fetters of the dead; to lay open the graves, out of which the bodies of the saints might arise. It seems clear enough, from the words which Matthew uses — who is the only one of the Evangelists who alludes to the event,—that they did not come out of their graves till the morning of our Lord's own resurrection. It is scarcely conceivable that they had been re-animated before that time, and lain awake in their graves till his rising called them from their tombs. Then they did arise, and went into the Holy City, and appeared unto many,—one certainly, of the most mysterious incidents which attended the death and resurrection of the Saviour, suggesting many a question: Who were they that thus arose? were they of the recently dead, recognised by loving relatives in the Holy City; or were they chosen from the buried of many bygone generations? Did they return to their sepulchres, or

did the grave never more close over them? Did they, after a brief appearance in the Holy City, pass into the heavenly Jerusalem? or did they linger upon this earth, to be the companions of our Lord during those forty days, so small a portion of which is occupied by Christ's appearances to his disciples, the rest spent where and how we know not; and did they, that ministry to Jesus over, go up with him into the heavenly places? All about them is hid in the deepest obscurity. Like shadows they come, like shadows they depart. This, however, their presence told, that the voice which from the cross cried, "It is finished," went where sound of human voice had never gone before, and did what sound of human voice had never done. It was heard among the dead; it stirred the heavy sleepers there, and piercing the stony sepulchre, went quivering into ears long sealed against all sound. And when the third morning dawned, these bodies of the saints arose, to complete as it were the pledge and promise of the general resurrection of the dead which our Lord's own rising carried with it, and having done that office, silently and mysteriously with-

drew. You may have sometimes seen a day in early spring, stolen from the coming summer, a day of sunshine so bright and warm, of air so bland, of breeze so gentle, that, as if fancying that her resurrection-time had come, dead nature woke, buds began to burst, flower leaves to unfold, and birds to sing,—all to be shut up again in death, as the bleak withering winds of days that followed swept across the plain. Even into such a day did the appearance of these old tenants of the grave turn that of our Lord's resurrection, lightening and enriching it with the promise of the time when all that are in their graves shall hear Christ's voice, and his full and final victory over death and the grave shall be accomplished.

Mark the Evangelist, to whom we are indebted for so many minute and graphic incidents in the gospel history, tells us that at the moment when Christ expired, the Roman officer in charge was standing over-against him, within a few yards of the cross, gazing on the face of the crucified. He had halted there as the darkness rolled away. He heard that loud and piercing cry, as of one

forsaken, come from the lips of Jesus. He saw the change come over the Saviour's countenance. the light that spread over those pallid features, the joy that beamed from those uplifted eyes. Another and a louder cry,—not now the cry as of one sinking in conflict, but of one rejoicing in victory,—when suddenly Jesus bows his head and gives up the ghost; that moment, too, the earthquake shook the earth, and the cross of Jesus trembled before the Roman's eyes. The shaking earth, the trembling cross, impressed him less, as Mark lets us know, than the loud cry so instantly followed by death. He had, perhaps, been present at other crucifixions, and knew well how long the band he ruled was ordinarily required to watch the crucified. But he had never seen, he had never known, he had never heard of a man dying upon a cross within six hours. He had seen other men expire; had watched weak nature as it wanes away at death — the voice sinking into feebleness with its last efforts at articulation, — but he had never heard a man in dying speak in tones like these. And so impressed was he with what he saw and heard,

that instantly and spontaneously he exclaimed, "Truly this man was the Son of God!" Foreigner and Gentile as he was, he may have attached no higher meaning to the epithet than Pilate did when he said to Jesus, "Art thou then the Son of God?" This much, however, he meant to say, that truly and to his judgment this Jesus was more than human—was divine—was that very Son of God, whatever this might mean, which these Jews had condemned him for claiming to be. Such was the faith so quickly kindled in this Gentile breast. The Cross is early giving tokens of its power. It lays hold of the dying thief, and opens to him the gates of Paradise. It lays hold of this Centurion, and works in him a faith which, let us hope, deepened into a trust in Jesus as his Saviour. From such unlikely quarters came the two testimonies borne to the Lord's divinity the day he died.

The Centurion speaks of him as one already dead. The pale face and the drooping head tell all the lookers on that he has breathed his last. The great interest of the day is over; the crowd breaks up; group after group returning to Jeru-

salem, in very different mood and temper from that in which they had come out a few hours before. It had been little more at first than an idle curiosity which had drawn many of those onlookers that morning from their dwellings. Cherishing, perhaps, no particular ill-will to Jesus, they had joined the procession on its way to Calvary. They gather by the way that this Jesus had been convicted as a pretender, who had impiously claimed to be their king, their Christ. They see how irritated the High Priests and their followers are at him. It is an unusual thing for these magnates of the people to come out, as they now are doing, to attend a public execution. There must surely be something peculiarly criminal in this Jesus, against whom their enmity is so bitter. Soon these new comers catch the spirit that their rulers have breathed into the crowd, and for the first three hours they heartily chime in with the others, and keep up their mockery of the crucified. But from the moment that the darkness falls upon them, what a change! There they stand, silently peering through the gloom;

no jest nor laughter now, nor strife of mocking tongues. Upon that cross, but dimly seen, their eyes are fixed. The wonder grows as to how all this shall end. It ends with those prodigies that accompany the death. Appalled by these, they smite upon their breasts—as Easterns do in presence of all superhuman power—and make their way back to their homes; no noisy, shouting rabble, but each man silent, and full of thought and awe. Who or what, then, could that Jesus be whom they had seen die such a death,—at whose death the whole frame of nature seemed to quiver? Whatever he was, he was not what their rulers had told them. No false, deceitful man, no impious pretender. Was he then indeed their Christ, their king? They got the answer to those questions a few weeks later, when Peter preached to that great company on the day of Pentecost; and may we not believe that among those who listened to the great Apostle on that occasion, and to whom he spake as to the very men who, with wicked hands, had slain the Lord of glory, there were not a few of those who now returned to Jerusalem from Calvary, impressed and half-convinced, wait-

ing but the work of the Spirit to turn them into true and faithful followers of the Crucified?

Such was the impression made upon the Roman officer, and on a section of the bystanders. But the High Priests and their minions, the true crucifiers of the Lord,—what impression has all which has happened thus at Calvary made on them? Has it stirred any doubt, has it awakened any compunction, has it allayed their fears or quenched their hate? No; they witness all these wonders, and remain hard and unrelenting as at the first. Speaking of that obduracy, which stood out against all the demonstrations of the Lord's Divinity, St. Gregory exclaims, "The heavens knew him, and forthwith sent out a star and a company of angels to sing his birth. The sea knew him, and made itself a way to be trodden by his feet; the earth knew him, and trembled at his dying; the sun knew him, and hid the rays of its light; the rocks knew him, for they were rent in twain; Hades knew him, and gave up the dead it had received. But though the senseless elements perceived him to be their Lord, the hearts of the unbelieving Jews knew him not as God,

and, harder than the very rocks, were not rent by repentance."

The only effect upon the rulers of the Jewish people of the sudden and unexpected death of Jesus was to set them thinking how the crosses and bodies which hung upon them might most speedily be removed. Their own Jewish code forbade that the body of one hung upon a tree should remain suspended over a single night: "His body shall not remain all night upon the tree, but thou shalt in any wise bury him that day, that thy land be not defiled."[1] As crucifixion was a mode of punishment originally unknown among the Jews, this command refers to the case of those who, after death by stoning or strangulation, were hung upon a gibbet. The Roman law and practice were different. Crucifixion was the mode of death to which slaves and the greater criminals were doomed. In ordinary circumstances, the bodies of the crucified were suffered to hang upon the cross till the action of the elements, at times otherwise aided and accelerated, wasted them away. Even when sepulture was

[1] See Deut. xxi.

allowed, it was thought profitable for the ends of justice that for some days the frightful spectacle should be exposed to the public eye. In no case under the Roman rule did burial take place on the very day of the execution. If that rule were in this instance to be broken, it must be under the special leave and direction of Pilate. Besides, however, the natural desire that their own rather than the Roman method of dealing with the crucified should be followed, there was another and more special reason why the Jews desired that the bodies should as quickly as possible be removed. Next day was the Sabbath; no common Sabbath either—the Sabbath of the great Paschal festival. It began at sunset. Only an hour or two remained. It would be offensive, ill-ominous, if on a day so sacred three bodies hanging upon crosses should be exhibited so near the Holy City. It would disturb, defile the services of the holy day. Besides, who could tell what effect upon the changeful, excitable multitude this spectacle of Jesus might have, if kept so long before their eyes? A deputation is despatched, therefore, to Pilate, to entreat

him to give orders that means may be taken to expedite the death by crucifixion, and have the bodies removed. Pilate accedes to the request; the necessary order is forwarded to Calvary, and the soldiers proceed in the ordinary way to execute it. They break the legs of both the others; they pass Jesus by. There is every sign, indeed, that he is already dead, but why not make his death thus doubly sure? Perhaps, even over the spirits of those rough and hardened men, the Saviour's looks and words, the manner of his death, the darkness and the earthquake, which they connected in some way with him, may have caused a feeling of awe to creep, restraining them from subjecting him to that rough handling which they were ready enough to give to the others. However this may have been, the shield of that prophecy,—"A bone of him shall not be broken," guarded his limbs from their rude and crushing strokes.

One, indeed, of the soldiers is not to be restrained, and to make sure that this seeming death is real, he lifts his spear as he passes by, and thrusts it into the Redeemer's side; a strong,

rude thrust, sufficient of itself to have caused death, inflicting a wide, deep wound, that left behind such a scar, that Jesus could say to Thomas afterwards, "Reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side." From that wound there flowed out blood and water, in such quantity, that the outflow attracted the special notice of John, who was standing at some distance from the cross; the blood and the water so distinct and distinguishable from one another, that this observer could not be deceived, and thought it right to leave behind him this peculiarly emphatic testimony: "He that saw it, bare record, and his record is true; and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye might believe." It has been thought that John was led to put such stress upon this incident of the crucifixion, and to press into such prominence his own testimony as an eye-witness to its reality, on account of the convincing refutation thus afforded of two strange heresies that sprung up early in the Church: the first, that Jesus had never really died upon the cross, but only passed into a swoon, from which he afterwards revived; and the second, that it

was not a real human body of flesh and blood, but only the appearance of one that was suspended on the cross. It may have been that the Evangelist had these beliefs in view. But whatever was his immediate object in testifying so particularly and so earnestly to the fact, it only puts that fact so much the more clearly now before our eyes, authorizing us to assume it as placed beyond all doubt, that within an hour or so after Christ's death—for it could not have been much longer, when a deep incision was made in the side of the Redeemer, there visibly flowed forth a copious stream of blood and water. Is that fact of any moment, does it give any clue to, or throw any light upon the proximate or physical cause of the death of Christ? The answer to these questions we reserve for our next Lecture.

Meanwhile, let us give a moment or two more to reflection upon that strange variety of impression and effect which the crucifixion of our Lord had upon the original spectators. There were those whom that spectacle plunged into a despondency bordering on despair. Mary, the mother

of our Lord, was not able to bear that sight, and the love of her Divine Son went forth, and withdrew her early from the trial of seeing him expire. His other acquaintance, and the women that followed him from Galilee, stood afar off, beholding; half ashamed and half afraid; with something of hope, with more of fear; lost in wonder that he, about whom they had been cherishing such grand, yet false and earthly expectations, should suffer himself, or should be suffered by that Father—of whom he had so often spoken as hearing him always, who had himself declared that he was at all times well pleased with him—to die such a death as this. As the darkness fell, perhaps a new hope sprung up within some of their breasts. Was Jesus about to use that darkness as a veil behind which he would withdraw himself, as he had withdrawn himself from those who were about to cast him from the rocky height at Nazareth? Had he gone up to that cross to work there the greatest of his miracles? and was he in very deed about to meet the taunt of his enemies, and come down from the cross that they might believe in him?

Alas! if any such hope arose, the ninth hour quenched it; and when they saw him draw his latest breath, this band of friends and followers of Jesus turned their backs on Calvary, with slow, sad footsteps to return, dispirited and disconsolate, to their homes. Mainly this was owing to the strength of that prejudice which had so early taken such strong possession of their minds, that the kingdom which their new Master was to set up was a temporal one. To that prejudice so sudden and so overwhelming a shock was given by the crucifixion, that, stunned and stupified by it, these simple-minded followers of Jesus were for a time unable to recall, and unprepared to believe, his own predictions as to his death. Upon the Scribes and Pharisees, the Chief Priests and rulers of the people, the six hours of the crucifixion had, as we have seen, none other than a hardening effect. The gentleness, the patience, the forgiving spirit, the thoughtfulness for others, the sore trouble of his own spirit, the supernatural darkness, the returning light, the sudden and sublime decease, the reeling earth, the opening graves;—all these, which might have moved them, had they not been

possessed by the one great passion of quenching for ever the hated pretensions of this Nazarene—have no other influence upon their spirits than quickening their ingenuity to contrive how best, most quickly, and most securely, they can accomplish their design. And these are they of all that motley crowd, who knew the most, and made the greatest profession of religion! These are the men who would not that morning cross the threshold of Pilate's dwelling, lest they might unfit themselves for the morrow's duties within the Temple! These are the men who cannot bear the thought that the services of their great Paschal Sabbath should be polluted by the proximity of the three crosses of Golgotha! They can spill, without compunction, the blood of the innocent. They can take that blood upon themselves and upon their children, but they cannot suffer the sight of it to offend their eye as they go up to worship upon Mount Zion. These are the men who, in their deep self-ignorance, in their proud and boastful spirit, were wont to say, "If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood

of the prophets." These are the men whose whole character and conduct are suggestive of the likenesses to themselves that have arisen in every age of the Church, one of whose noted peculiarities is ever this, that to wound their pride, or expose in any way their hollow pretensions, is sure to draw down on all who attempt the dangerous office the very same malignity of dislike and persecution that nailed our Saviour to his cross.

Upon many of the crowd which stood for those six hours around the cross, the events that transpired there appear to have produced that surprise, solemnity, alarm, and subdued state of feeling, they were so fitted to produce on the bulk of mankind. We have already ventured to express the hope that, with not a few of them, what they saw and heard prepared their minds and opened their hearts to receive the good seed which, scattered on the day of Pentecost by apostolic hands, was so watered with the influences of the Holy Spirit.

But are we wrong in imagining, of another and perhaps still larger proportion of those who returned, beating their breasts, to Jerusalem, that

a few days, or a few weeks, brought them down to their ordinary and natural condition of indifference and unconcern? Yes, they would say, that was a wonderful forenoon; there was a strange concurrence of striking things about the close of that strange man's life; but as to any further inquiry after him—the lending their ears to that gospel which set him forth as crucified to redeem their souls from death, and cover, by his mediation, the multitude of their sins—they became too callous, the world got too strong a hold of them, to admit of their giving any further or more earnest heed. Have not these, too, their likenesses among us? men capable of strong but temporary impressions. Bring them to Golgotha, set up the cross before them, let them see the Saviour die, and their breasts may own a sentiment akin to that which affected so many originally at Calvary: but they are morning clouds those feelings, it is an early dew this softening of their hearts; let the bright sun rise, the fresh breeze blow; let the day, with so many calls to business and pleasure come, and those clouds vanish,—this dew disappears. And yet the cross

was not to be lifted up in vain. It hardened the Pharisees, it dispirited the disciples, it awed the multitude; but it saved the penitent thief, and it convinced the unprejudiced Centurion. "I," said the Lord himself, contemplating beforehand the triumph of his cross,—"I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me." And when he was lifted up, even before he died, and in the very act of dying, he drew to him that Gentile and that Jew, each one the leader of a multitude that no man may number, upon whom the power of that attraction has since acted. God grant that upon all our spirits this power may come, drawing us to Jesus now, and lifting us at last to heaven.

XIII.

THE PHYSICAL CAUSE OF THE DEATH OF CHRIST.[1]

HAD no one interfered, the body of our Lord had been taken down by the soldiers from the cross, by their cold and careless hands to be conveyed away to one of those separate burying-places reserved for those who had suffered the extreme penalty of the law. Not unfrequently, in such cases, friends or relatives came forward to crave the body at the hands of the authorities, that they might give it a more becoming burial. There was but one exception, the case of those whose crime was treason against the State,—the very crime for which Christ had, nominally at least, been condemned. In that instance the mode of disposal of the body prescribed by law was rarely if ever departed from. But where are there any friends or relatives of Jesus in condition

[1] John xix. 33-35; Mark xv. 42-45.

hopefully to interfere? That small band of his acquaintance, which has stood throughout the crucifixion beholding it afar off, is composed principally of women. John, indeed, is there, a witness of the closing scene, and of the preparation made for the removal of the bodies. But was Pilate, to whom application must of course be made, likely to listen to any petition that he might present? John knew something of the High Priest, but nothing of the Roman Governor. There was everything in fact to discourage him from making any application in that quarter, even if the idea of doing so had occurred to him. But it is most unlikely that it had. For what could John, or the disciples generally, have done with the body of their Master though they had got it into their hands? It must be buried quickly,—within an hour or so. And where could these Galilean strangers find a grave at Jerusalem to lay it in, where but in some exposed and public place of sepulture, unsuitable for the destiny in store for it?

At the fitting time, the fit instrument appears, Joseph of Arimathea, a rich man, an honourable

councillor, a member of the Sanhedrim well known as such to Pilate, has either himself been present at the crucifixion, or hears how matters stand. Shall the body of Jesus pass into the rough hands of these Roman soldiers, and be dragged by them to a dishonoured burial? Not if he can hinder it. He has a new sepulchre of his own, close by the very place where Christ has died, whose very nearness to the spot suggests to him how suitable a place it would be for so sacred a deposit. Joseph goes instantly to Pilate, and boldly asks that the body may be given to him. Pilate makes no difficulty regarding the alleged crime of Jesus. He never had believed that Christ was guilty of treason against Cæsar's government; does not now act on any such assumption. But Joseph has told him something about the time and manner of the Saviour's death which he had not heard before, which greatly amazes and induces him to hesitate. Those Jews who had come to him a short time before, with the request that he would issue an order that the bones of the three might be broken and their bodies removed, must have come to him after the three hours' darkness, after the

death of Christ. But they had told him nothing about that death. They had spoken as if the same means for expediting their decease had to be taken with all the three. Now, for the first time, he hears that Jesus had, even then, breathed his last; had died just as that mysterious darkness, which had troubled Pilate as it had troubled the crowd at Golgotha, had rolled away; as that earthquake, which had shaken every dwelling in Jerusalem, had been felt within his residence. Pilate will not believe it,—can scarcely credit Joseph's story,—must have a thing so strange attested upon better testimony. Waiving, in the meantime, all answer to Joseph's request, he sends for the Centurion, who, doubtless, told him all that he had witnessed; told him about the loud voice, and the immediately succeeding death; told him what raised in the eyes of these two Romans, even to the height of a miracle, a death like this.

We should understand their feelings better were we as familiar as they were with the common course of things at a crucifixion. It is now fifteen hundred years since this mode of punishment

ceased to be practised in Christendom; it was discontinued because of the sacredness, the spiritual glory which Christ's crucifixion had thrown around it. With eyes unfamiliar with its details, yet with imaginations that delighted to picture its cruelties and horrors, the priesthood of the middle ages put these materials into the hands of poets and painters, out of which the popular conceptions of the erection of the cross, and the sufferings on the cross, and the taking down from the cross, have for so long a time been drawn. There is much in these conceptions, that by using the means of information which we now possess, we can assure ourselves is incorrect. The cross was no such elevated structure as we see it sometimes represented, needing ladders to be applied to get at the suspended body. It was seldom more than a foot or two higher than the man it bore; neither was the whole weight of his body borne upon the nails which pierced the hands. Such a position of painful suspension, causing such a strain upon all the muscles of the upper extremities, would have added greatly to the sufferings of the victim, and brought them to a much

speedier close. The cross, in every instance, was furnished with a small piece of wood projecting from the upright post or beam, astride which the crucified sat, and which bore the chief weight of his body. The consequence of this arrangement was, that crucifixion was a much more lingering kind of death, and, in its earlier stages, a much less excruciating one than we are apt to imagine, or than otherwise it would have been. As there was but little loss of blood,—the nails that pierced the extremities touching no large blood-vessel, and closing the wounds they made,—the death which followed resulted from the processes of bodily exhaustion and irritation; and these were so slow, that in no case, where the person crucified was in ordinary health and vigour, did they terminate within twelve hours. Almost invariably he survived the first twenty-four hours, lived generally over the second, occasionally even into the fifth or sixth day. The ancient testimonies to this fact are quite explicit, nor are modern ones wanting, although there are but few parts of the world now where crucifixion is practised. "I was told," says

Captain Clapperton, speaking of the capital punishments inflicted in Soudan, a district of Africa, "that wretches on the cross generally linger three days before death puts an end to their sufferings."

So well was it understood by the early Fathers of the Church, by those who lived in or near the times when this mode of capital punishment was still in use, that life never was terminated by it alone within six hours, as was the case with Christ, that they all agree in attributing his death to a supernatural agency. Most of them, as well as many of the most distinguished of our modern commentators, assign it to the exercise by Christ of the power over his own life which he possessed; in accordance, it was thought, with his own declaration: "No man taketh my life from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father." That Christ's death was entirely voluntary, submitted to of his own free will, and not under any outward pressure or constraint, is universally conceded. This entire voluntariness,

however, it will at once appear to you, is sufficiently covered and vindicated, when we believe that whatever the physical agencies were which combined to effect the death, it was an act of pure free will in him to submit to their operation. That without or independent of any such agency, Christ chose to accelerate his decease upon the cross by a simple fiat of his own will, —breaking the tie which bound body and soul together, was the solution of the difficulty very naturally resorted to by those who had the clearest possible perception of the extraordinary character of this incident, and who knew of no other adequate cause to which it could be attributed.

Another solution, indeed, has been proposed, reserved for modern times, but not coming from our highest authorities, which would explain the speedy death of Jesus on the cross, by ascribing it to an extreme degree of bodily debility induced by the sleepless night, the agony in the Garden, the scourging in Pilate's Hall, and the mental conflict at Calvary. All these must undoubtedly have told upon the frame of the suffering Redeemer, and have impaired its powers of endur-

ance. But we must remember that they found that frame in the very flower and fulness of its strength, free, we may believe, of all constitutional or induced defects. Nor should we, in order to make out this solution to be sufficient, exaggerate their actual effects. However acute the bodily endurance of Gethsemane may have been, we know that Jesus was supernaturally assisted to sustain them; they passed wholly away when the mental agony which produced them ended. You see no trace of them, in our Lord's presentation of himself to the band which arrested him, or in his appearances before Caiaphas and Pilate. The scourging was a not uncommon precursor of crucifixion, and could not have enfeebled Christ more than it did others. He bent so much beneath the weight of the cross that a temporary relief from the burden was given; but that he had not sunk in utter exhaustion was apparent enough, from the very manner in which he turned immediately thereafter to the daughters of Jerusalem, and from the way in which he spoke to them. Further evidence that Jesus did not sink prematurely under physical debility is afforded

us by the fact, witnessed to particularly by many of the Evangelists, and which, as we saw in our last Lecture, made a strong impression upon the mind of the Centurion. The fact alluded to is this, that it was with a loud voice, indicating a great amount of existing vigour, that Jesus uttered his last fervent exclamation on the cross. He did not die of sheer exhaustion, fainting away in feebleness, as one drained wholly of his strength.

Are we, then, to leave the mystery of our Lord's dying thus, at the ninth hour, in the obscurity which covers it; or is there any other probable explanation of the circumstance? It is now some years since a devout and scholarly physician,[1] as the result, he tells us, of a quarter of a century's reading and reflection, ventured to suggest—dealing with this subject with all that reverence and delicacy with which it so especially requires to be handled—that the immediate physical cause of the death of Christ was the rupture of his heart, induced by the inner agony of his spirit. That strong emotion may of itself prostrate the

[1] Dr. Stroud, in a treatise *On the Physical Cause of the Death of Christ*, published in 1847.

body in death, is a familiar fact in the history of the passions.[1] Joy, or grief, or anger, suddenly or intensely excited, have been often known to produce this effect. It has been only, however, in later times that the discovery has been made, by *post-mortem* examinations, that in such instances, the death resulted from actual rupture of the heart. That organ, which the universal language of mankind has spoken of as being peculiarly affected by the play of the passions, has been found in such cases to have been rent or torn by the violence of its own action. The blood issuing from the fissure thus created has filled the pericardium,[2] and, by its pressure, stopped the action of the heart. In speaking of those who have died of a broken heart, we have been using words that were often exactly and literally true.

[1] Ancient story tells us of one of the greatest of Greek tragedians (Sophocles) expiring on its being announced to him that the palm of victory had been awarded, in a public literary contest in which he was engaged; of a father dying on its being told him that, on the same day, three of his sons had been crowned as victors in the Olympian games.—See Dr. Stroud's treatise.

[2] The shut sac or bag by which the heart is surrounded and enclosed.

If this, then, be sometimes one of the proved results of extreme, intense emotion, why may it not have been realized in the case of the Redeemer? If common earthly sorrow has broken other human hearts, why may not that sorrow, deep beyond all other sorrow, have broken his? We know that of itself, apart from all external appliances, the agony of his spirit in Gethsemane so affected his body that a bloody sweat suffused it,—a result identical with what has been sometimes noticed of extreme surprise or terror having bathed the human body in the same kind of bloody dew. Why, then, should not the agony of the Saviour's spirit on the cross—which we have every reason to regard as a renewal of that in the Garden—have told upon his physical frame in a way equally analogous to other results verified by experience? Still, however, had we nothing more positive to go upon, it could only be regarded as a conjecture, a thing conceivable and quite possible, that Jesus had literally died of a broken heart. But that striking incident, upon the nature of which, and the singular testimony regarding it, we remarked in the close of our last Lecture, puts

positive evidence into our hands; and the precise weight of this evidence every recent inquiry into the condition of the blood within the human body after death has been helping us more accurately and fully to appreciate. Let me remind you, then, that within an hour or two after our Saviour's death (it could not have been more), what the skilful knife of the anatomist does upon the subject on which it operates, the Roman soldier's spear did upon the dead body of our Lord,—it broadly and deeply pierced the side, and from the wound inflicted thus there flowed out blood and water; so much of both, and the water so distinguishable from the blood, as to attract the particular observation of John, who was standing a little way off. We cannot be wrong in fixing our attention upon a fact to which the beloved Apostle so especially summons it in his Gospel.

First, then, we have it now authenticated beyond reasonable doubt, that what John noticed, the copious outflow of blood and water, is precisely what would have happened on the supposition that the heart of our Redeemer had

been ruptured under the pressure of inward grief, —is precisely what has been noticed in other instances of this form of death. When it escapes from the blood-vessels, whether that escape takes place within the body or without, human blood within a short time coagulates, its watery part separating slowly from its thicker substance. When rupture of the heart takes place, and the blood which that organ contains passes into the pericardium, it ere long undergoes this change; and, as the capsule into which it flows is large enough to contain many ounces' weight of liquid, if, when it is full, the heart be pierced, the contents escaping exhibit such a stream of mingled blood and water as the eye of John noticed as he gazed upon the cross. This is what the anatomist has actually witnessed; numerous instances existing in which the quantity and quality of the blood escaping from a ruptured heart have been carefully noted and recorded. Having satisfied ourselves as to these facts, from regarding it at first as but an ingenious supposition, we feel constrained to regard it as in the highest degree probable that Christ our Saviour died this very

kind of death. But what shuts us up to this conclusion is, that no other satisfactory explanation can be given of the outflow of blood and water from the Saviour's side. When not extravasated—that is, when allowed at death to remain in the vascular system,—the blood of the human body rarely coagulates, and when it does, the coagulation, or separation into blood and water, does not take place till many hours after death. In rare instances—of persons dying from long-continued or extreme debility—the entire blood of the body has been found in a half watery condition; but our Saviour's death was not an instance of this kind, and even though it should be imagined that what long-continued illness did with others, agony of spirit did with him, inducing the same degree of debility, attended with all its ordinary physical results; this, which is the only other supposition that can be held as accounting to us for what John witnessed, fails in this respect, that, pierce when or how it might, it could only have been a few trickling drops of watery blood that the spear of the soldier could have extracted from the Redeemer's side. Inas-

much, then, as all other attempted explanations of the recorded incidents of our Redeemer's death are found to be at fault, and inasmuch as it corresponds with and explains them all, we rest in the belief that such was the bitter agony of the Redeemer's soul as he hung upon the cross, that —unstrengthened now by any angel from heaven, as in the Garden, when but for that strengthening the same issue might have been realized—the heart of our Redeemer was broken, and in this way the tie that bound body and spirit together was dissolved.[1]

But of what use is it to institute any such inquiry as that in which we have been engaged? or what gain would there be in winning for the conclusion arrived at a general assent? It might be enough to say here that, if reverently treated, there is no single incident connected with the life or death of our Divine Redeemer, upon which it is possible that any light may be thrown, which does not solicit at our hands the utmost effort we can make fully and minutely to understand it. Even, then, though it should appear that no

[1] See Appendix.

direct or practical benefit would attend the discovery and establishment of the true and proximate physical cause of the death of Christ, still we should regard the inquiry as one in itself too full of interest to refrain from prosecuting it. But would it not be wonderful, would it not correspond with other evidences of the truth of the Gospel narrative which the progress of our knowledge has eliminated, should it turn out to be true, as we believe it has done, that the accounts of the sufferings and death of Jesus, drawn up by four independent witnesses—all of them uninformed as to the true state of the case, and signally ignorant how that which they recorded might serve to reveal it—did, nevertheless, when brought together and minutely scrutinized, contain within them those distinct and decisive tokens which the advanced science of this age recognises as indicative of a mode of death, so singular in its character, so rare in its occurrence, so peculiar in its physical effects?

Would it not also give a new meaning to some of the expressions which in Psalms lxix. and xxii. —the two Psalms specially predictive of his suf-

ferings and death—our Saviour is himself represented as employing? Read together the 20th and 21st verses of Psalm lxix.: "Reproach hath broken my heart; and I am full of heaviness: and I looked for some to take pity, but there was none; and for comforters, but I found none. They gave me also gall for my meat; and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink." If the very kind of drink they were to offer him was not deemed unworthy of being specified in that ancient prophecy—the very smallness, in fact, of the incident making it serve all the better the purposes of the prophecy,—need we wonder if it were only the literal truth which the speaker uttered when he said, "Reproach hath broken my heart"? When so much has turned out to be literally true, it is but ranking that expression with the others, when it also has that character assigned to it. Or take the 14th verse of Psalm xxii.: "I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint: my heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels." Here, again, we feel that, if in other parts of that Psalm —if in speaking of the shooting out of the lips, the

shaking of the head, the words that were spoken, the parting of his garments, the casting of lots for his vesture—the great Sufferer is recognised as describing that which did afterwards actually occur, it is not surprising if, in describing his own bodily condition, in speaking, as he does, especially of the state of his heart, he should be speaking of that which also was actually realized.

But there are positive benefits attendant on the reception of that view of the Saviour's death which I have now unfolded to you. It serves, I think, to spiritualize and elevate our conception of the sufferings of Calvary; it carries our thoughts away from the mere bodily endurances of the crucifixion; it concentrates them on that mysterious woe which agitated his spirit, till the very heart that beat within the body of the agonized Redeemer, under the powerful impulse of those emotions which shook and wrung his soul, did burst and break. If the bloody sweat of the Garden, and the broken heart of the Cross, were naturally, directly, exclusively the results of those inward sorrows to which it pleased the Saviour to open his soul, that in the enduring of

them he might bear our sins, then how little had man to do physically with the infliction of that agony wherein the great atonement lay! If we have read and interpreted aright the details of our Lord's sufferings in the Garden and on the Cross, these very details do of themselves throw into the background the corporeal part of the endurances, representing it in fact only as the appropriate physical appendix to that overwhelming sorrow, by which the spirit of the Redeemer was bowed down under the load of human guilt. This spiritual sorrow formed the body of that agony of which the corporeal was but the shadow and the sign.

From the very heart of the simple but most affecting records of Gethsemane and the Cross there issues the voice of a double warning—a warning against any such estimate of the sufferings of the man Christ Jesus as would assimilate them to the common sorrows of suffering humanity. As a man there was nothing in all that he had to endure from man, which can in any way account for his sweat being as great drops of blood in the Garden. In the rending of his

heart upon the cross, his sufferings remain, even in their outward manifestations and results, inexplicable on any other supposition than that which attributes to them a vicarious character, representing them as borne by the incarnate Son of God, as the Head and Representative of his people. But whilst the very outward history of Gethsemane and the Cross pleads thus strongly against any lowering of our estimate of the true character and design of Christ's sufferings, does it not as strongly and persuasively lift up its protest against those pictorial and sentimental representations of the Saviour in his agony and in his death, which make their appeal to a mere human sympathy, by dwelling upon and exaggerating the bodily endurances which were undergone? We approach these closing scenes of our Redeemer's life, we plant our footsteps in the neighbourhood of the Garden and the Cross; as soon as we do so, we begin to feel that it is very sacred ground we tread. We try to get nearer and nearer to the Great Sufferer, to look a little farther into the bosom of that exceeding sorrow of his troubled oppressed, bewildered

spirit. It is not long ere we become convinced, that in that sorrow there are elements we are altogether unable to compute and appreciate, and that our most becoming attitude, in presence of such a Sufferer as this—the One through whose sufferings for us we look for our forgiveness and acceptance with God—is one of childlike trust, devout adoring gratitude and love. It is too remote, too hidden a region this for us rashly to invade, in the hope, that with those dim lights which alone are in our hands, we shall be able to explore it. It is too sacred a region for the vulgar tread of a mere human curiosity, or the busy play of a mere human sympathy.

But what chiefly commends to us the view now given of the Redeemer's death, is its correspondence with all that the Scriptures teach as to the sacrificial character of that death,—all that they tell us of the virtue of Christ's most precious blood. More clearly and immediately than any other does this view represent Christ's death as the proximate and natural result of the offering up of himself to God, the pouring out of his soul in the great sacrifice for sin. From the lips of

the broken-hearted, these words seem fraught to us with a new significance, "No man taketh my life from me; I lay it down of myself,"—all, even to the very death of the body, being embraced in his entire willingness that there should be laid upon him the transgressions of us all. It was his soul, his life, that Jesus gave a ransom for many. The life was regarded as lying in the blood, and so it was the blood of the sacrificed animal that was sprinkled of old upon the door-posts, upon the altar, upon the mercy-seat, — the atoning virtue regarded as accompanying the application of the blood; and so, lifting this idea up from the level of mere ceremonialism, we are taught that "without shedding of blood," without life given for life, "there is no remission;" and so, still further pointing us to the one true sacrifice, we are told that not by the blood of bulls and goats, but by his own blood Christ has entered into the Holy Place, having obtained eternal redemption for us. It is the blood of Christ "which cleanseth from all sin." It is the blood of Christ "which purges the conscience from dead works, to serve the living God." It is the

blood of the covenant by which we are sanctified. We know, and desire ever to remember, that this is but a figurative expression; that the blood of Christ stands only as the type or emblem of the life that was given up to God for us. But the blood merely of a crucifixion does not fill up the type, does not put its full meaning into the figure. Crucifixion was not a bloody death, it was only a few trickling drops that flowed from the pierced hands and feet. But if, indeed, it was his very heart's blood which Jesus poured out in the act of giving up his life for us on Calvary, with what fuller and richer significance will that expression, "the blood of Jesus," fall upon the ear of faith! This, then, is he—his bleeding broken heart the witness to it—who came by water and by blood; not by water only, but by water and by blood. With minds afresh impressed by the thought how it was that the blood of Christ was shed; with hearts all full of gratitude and love, let us take up the words that the Spirit has put into our lips: "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever." "Thou art

worthy, for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation."

"Rock of ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in thee;
Let the water and the blood,
From thy riven side that flowed,
Be of sin the double cure,
Cleanse me from its guilt and power."

XIV.

THE BURIAL.[1]

JOSEPH of Arimathea and Nicodemus were both rulers of the Jews, both members of the Sanhedrim,—the Jewish council or court, composed of seventy members, in whose hands the supreme judicial power was lodged. It was the right and duty of both these men to have been present at the trial of our Lord on the morning of the crucifixion. In common with the other members of the Sanhedrim, they in all likelihood received the early summons to assemble in the hall of Caiaphas. It would seem, however, that they did not obey the call; that, knowing something beforehand of the object of the meeting, of the spirit and design of those who summoned it, they absented themselves. We infer this from the fact that when, after Christ's great confession, the High Priest put

[1] John xix. 38-42; Luke xxiii. 55; Matt. xxvii. 61.

the question, "What think ye?" to the Council, they all condemned him to be guilty of death. But we are told of Joseph, that he had not consented to the counsel and deed of those by whom the arrest and condemnation of Jesus were planned and executed. In what way his dissent had been expressed we are not informed, but having somehow intimated it beforehand, it is altogether improbable that, without any demur on his part, he should have been a consenting party to the final sentence when pronounced. And neither had Nicodemus gone in with the course which his fellow-rulers had from the beginning pursued towards Jesus. When the officers of the Chief Priests and Pharisees came back to their employers, their task unexecuted, giving as their reason for not having arrested Jesus, that "never man spake like this man," so provoked were those Pharisees at seeing such influence exerted by Jesus upon their own menial servants, that in the passion of the moment, they exclaimed, "Are ye also deceived? Have any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed on him? But this people, who knoweth not the law, are cursed."

Perhaps the question about the rulers touched the conscience of Nicodemus, who was present on the occasion; perhaps he felt that it was not so true as they imagined that none of the rulers believed on Jesus; perhaps he felt somewhat ashamed of himself and of the false position which he occupied. At any rate, the haughty and contemptuous tone of his brethren stirred him up for once to say a word:—"Doth our law," said he to them, "judge any man before it hear him, and know what he doeth?" A very gentle and reasonable remonstrance, but one which had no other effect than turning against himself the wrath that had been expending itself upon their officials. "Art thou also," they say to him, "of Galilee?" Nicodemus cowered under that question, and the suspicion that it implied. Neither then nor afterwards did he say or do anything more which might expose him to the imputation of being a follower of Jesus; but we cannot think so ill of him as to believe that, beyond concealing whatever belief in Christ he cherished, he would have played the hypocrite so far as to let his voice

openly be heard as one of those condemning our Lord to death.

Let us judge both these men as fairly and gently as we ourselves would desire to be judged. To what amount of enlightenment and belief as to the character and claims of Christ they had arrived previous to his decease, it were difficult to imagine. Both must have had a large amount of deep, inveterate Jewish prejudice to contend with in accepting the Messiahship of the Nazarene; not such prejudice alone as was common to the great mass of their countrymen, but such as had a peculiar hold on the more educated men of their time, when raised to be guides and rulers of the people. Over all this prejudice Joseph had already triumphed; there was a sincerity and integrity of judgment in him, an earnest spirit of faith and hope; he was a good man and a just; one who, like the aged Simeon, had been waiting for the kingdom of God, the better prepared to hail it in whatever guise it came. He had thus become really, though not openly or professedly, a disciple of Jesus. We do not know whether Nicodemus had got so far. We do know, how-

ever, that the very first words and acts of Jesus at Jerusalem made the deepest and most favourable impression on his mind. It was at the very opening of our Lord's ministry, that this man came to Jesus by night. Instead of thinking of the covert way in which he came, only to find ground of censure in it, let us remember that he was the one and only ruler who did in any way come to Jesus; and that he came—as his very first words of salutation and inquiry showed—in the spirit of deep respect, and earnest desire for instruction. Let us remember, too, that without one word of blame escaping from our Lord's own lips, it was to this man that, at so early a period of his ministry, our Saviour made the clear and full disclosure of the great object of his own mission and death, preserved in the third chapter of the Gospel by John; that it was to Nicodemus he spake of that new spiritual birth by which the kingdom was to be entered; that it was to Nicodemus he said, that as Moses had lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must He be lifted up; that it was to Nicodemus that the great saying was addressed, "God so loved the world

that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Surely he who, up till near the close, was so chary of speaking about his death even to his own disciples, would not, at the very beginning of his ministry, have spoken thus to this ruler of the Jews, had he not perceived in him one willing and waiting to be taught. Christ must have seen some good soil in that man's heart, to have scattered there so much of the good seed. That seed was long of germinating, but it bore fruit at last, very pleasant for the eye to look upon.

It was the fault both of Joseph and Nicodemus, that they hid, as it were, their faces from Christ; that they were ashamed and afraid to confess him openly. But who shall tell us exactly what their state of mind, their faith and feeling toward him was; how much of hesitation both of them may—indeed, we may boldly say must—have felt as to many things about Jesus which they could in no way harmonize with their conceptions of the Great Prophet that was to arise? "Search and look," his brother councillors had said to Nicodemus, at that time

when he had ventured to interpose the question which provoked them,—"search and look; for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet." Nicodemus had nothing to say to that bold assertion; nothing to say, we may well believe, to many an objection taken to the pretensions of the Son of the Galilean carpenter. In common with Joseph, he may have believed; but both together may have been quietly waiting till some further and more distinct manifestations of his Messiahship were made by Christ. But why did they not, so far as they did believe in him, openly acknowledge it? Why did they not feel rebuked by that poor man, blind from his birth, dragged for examination before them, who witnessed in their presence so good a confession? It was because they knew so well that their brother rulers had agreed that, "if any man did confess that he was Christ, he should be put out of the synagogue." It was because they knew so well and felt so keenly what to them that excommunication would involve: for it was no slight punishment among the Jews to be expelled from the synagogue; it involved in its extreme issue consequences far more disastrous

than a mere ban of admission into their religious assemblies; it involved loss of station, separation from kindred and the society of their fellow-men. To the poor blind beggar upon whom it actually was passed, that doom may have fallen but lightly; for he had never known much of that of which this doom was to deprive him. A very different thing this expulsion from the synagogue would have been to Joseph and to Nicodemus. Let us not judge these men too harshly for the reluctance they showed to brave it; let us rather try to put ourselves exactly in their position, that we may sympathize with the hesitation which they felt in making any open acknowledgment of their attachment to Christ.

His death, however, at once put an end to that hesitation in both their breasts. They may not have been present at the crucifixion. They would not well have known where to take their station, or how to comport themselves there. They could not have joined in the mockery, nor were they prepared to exhibit themselves as friends of the Crucified. But though not spectators of the tragedy, they were somewhere in the immediate

neighbourhood, waiting anxiously to learn the issue. Could they, members of the same Sanhedrim, thrown often into contact, witnesses of each other's bearing and conduct, as to all the steps which had been taken against Jesus, have remained ignorant of each other's secret leanings toward the persecuted Nazarene? Was it by chance they met together at the cross, to act in concert there? We would rather believe that, attracted by the tie of a common sympathy with Jesus, the sad news of his being taken out to Golgotha to be crucified brought them that forenoon together; that they were by each other's side as the tidings reached them of all the wonders which had transpired around the cross, and of the strange death which Jesus died. The resolution of both is promptly taken; and it looks, certainly, as if taken with the knowledge of each other's purpose. Joseph goes at once boldly to Pilate, and craves the body of Jesus. An ancient prophecy, of which he knew nothing—one that seemed, as Jesus died, most unlikely of accomplishment—had proclaimed that he was to make his grave with the rich. This rich man has a

new sepulchre, wherein never man lay, which he had bought or got hewn out of the rock, with the idea, perhaps, that he might himself be the first to occupy it. It lies there close at hand, not many paces from the cross. He is resolved to open it, that it may receive, as its first tenant, the body of the crucified. Nay, further; as there are few, if any, now of Christ's known friends to undertake the task, he is resolved—his dignity, the sense of shame, the fear of the Jews, all forgotten—to put his own hands to the office of giving that body the most honourable sepulture that the time and circumstances can afford.

Once assured, on the Centurion's testimony, that it was even as Joseph said, Pilate at once gives the order that the body shall be committed into his hands. The Centurion, bearing that order, returns to Golgotha. Joseph provides himself by the way with the clean white cloth in which to shroud the body. The soldiers, at their officer's command, bear the bodies of the other two away, leaving that of Jesus still suspended on the cross. It is there when Joseph reaches the spot, to be dealt with as he likes. How quiet and how lonely

the place, as the first preparations are made for the interment! few to help, and none to interrupt. The crowd has all dispersed; some half-dozen Galilean women alone remain. But is John not here? He had returned to Calvary, had seen but a little while before the thrust of the soldier's spear; he knew that but a short time was left for disposing of the body. Is it at all likely that in such circumstances he should leave, and not wait to see the close? Let us believe that though, with his accustomed modesty, he has veiled his presence, he was present standing with those Galilean women. They see, coming in haste, this Joseph of Arimathea, whom none of them had ever known as a disciple of their Master; they see the white linen cloth that he has provided; they notice that the body is committed to his charge; they watch with wonder as he puts forth his own hand to the taking down of the body. Their wonder grows as Nicodemus—also a stranger to them, whom they had never seen coming to Jesus—joins himself to Joseph; not rudely and roughly, as the soldiers had dealt with the others, but gently and reverently handling the dead. As

they lay the body on the ground, it appears that this new-comer, Nicodemus, has brought with him a mixture of powdered myrrh and aloes, about one hundred pounds' weight. The richest man in Jerusalem could not have furnished more or better spicery for the burial of his dearest friend. It is evident that these two men have it in their heart, and are ready to put to their hands, to treat the dead with all due respect. Their fears disarmed, assured of the friendly purpose of those interposing thus, the Galilean women gather in around the pale and lifeless form. The white shroud is ready, the myrrh and the aloes are at hand, but who shall spread those spices on the funeral garment, and wrap it round the corpse to fit it for the burial? This is a service, one of the last and the saddest which our poor humanity needs, which, as if by an instinct of nature, woman's gentle hand has in all ages and in all countries been wont to render to the dead; and though the Gospel narrative be silent here, we will not believe that it was otherwise at the cross; we will not believe but that it was the tender hands of those loving women who had

watched at Calvary from morningtide till now, which offer their aid, and are permitted and honoured to wipe from that mutilated form the bloody marks of dishonour which it wore, to swathe it with the pure linen robe, and wrap around the thorn-marked brow the napkin, so falsely deemed to be the last clothing of the dead.

One thing alone is wanting, that the manner of the Jews in burying may be observed—a bier to lay the body on, to bear it to the sepulchre. There has been no time to get one, or it is felt that the distance is so short that it is not needed. That body has, however, the best bier of all—the hands of true affection, to lift it up and carry it across to the new tomb which waits to receive it. The feet let us assign to Joseph, the body to Nicodemus, and that regal head with those closed eyes, over which the shadows of the resurrection are already flitting, let us lay it on the breast of the beloved disciple. The brief path from the cross to the sepulchre is soon traversed. In silence and in deep sorrow they bear their sacred burden, and lay it gently down upon its clean, cold rocky bed.

The last look of the dead is taken. The buriers reverently withdraw, the stone is rolled to the mouth of the sepulchre:—separated from the living—Jesus rests with the dead—

"At length the worst is o'er, and thou art laid
Deep in thy darksome bed;
All still and cold behind yon dreary stone
Thy sacred form is gone.
Around those lips where peace and mercy hung
The dew of death hath clung;
The dull earth o'er thee, and thy friends around,
Thou sleep'st a silent corse, in funeral-raiment wound."

The burial is over now, and we might depart; but let us linger a little longer, and bestow a parting look on the persons and the place,—the buriers and the burying-ground. The former have been few in number; what they have to do, they must do quickly; for the sun is far down in the western sky when Joseph gets the order from Pilate; and before it sets, before the great Sabbath begins, they must lay Jesus in the grave. Yet hurried as they have been, with all such honour as they can show, with every token of respect, have they laid that body in the tomb; they have done all they could. The last service which Jesus ever needed at the hands of men it has been their

privilege to render. And for the manner in which they have rendered it, shall we not honour them? Yes, verily, wherever this gospel of the kingdom shall be made known, what they thus did for the Lord's burial shall be told for a memorial of them; and henceforth we shall forget of Joseph that hitherto he had concealed his discipleship, and acted as if he were a stranger to the Lord, seeing that, when Christ was in such a special sense a stranger on the earth, he opened his own new sepulchre to take him in; and we shall forget it of Nicodemus that it was by night he had come to Jesus, seeing that, upon this last sad day he came forth so openly, with his costly offering of myrrh and aloes, to embalm Christ for the burial. Of the Galilean women we have nothing to forget; but let this be the token wherewith we shall remember them, that, the last at the cross and the first at the sepulchre, they were the latest at the grave: for Joseph has departed; Nicodemus and the rest are gone; but there, while the sun goes down, and the evening shadows deepen around, the very solitude and gloom of the place such as might have warned them away—there are Mary

Magdalene and the other Mary to be seen sitting over-against the sepulchre, unable to tear themselves from the spot, gazing through their tears at the place where the body of their Lord is laid.

Let us now bestow a parting look upon the burying-ground. "In the place where he was crucified there was a garden, and in that garden a sepulchre." Plant yourselves before that sepulchre, and look around. This is no place of graves; here rise around you no memorials of the dead. You see but a single sepulchre, and that sepulchre in a garden. Strange mingling this of opposites, the garden of life and growth and beauty, circling the sepulchre of death, corruption, and decay. Miniature of the strange world we live in. What garden of it has not its own grave? Your path may, for a time, be through flowers and fragrance; follow it far enough, it leads ever to a grave. But this sepulchre in this garden suggests other and happier thoughts. It was in a garden once of old —in Eden, that death had his first summons given, to find there his first prey; it is in a garden here at Calvary, that the last enemy of mankind has the death-blow given to him—that the great

Conqueror is in his turn overcome. Upon that stone which they rolled to the mouth of the sepulchre, let us engrave the words—"O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ." What a change it has made in the character and aspect of the grave, that our Saviour himself once lay in it! He has stripped it of its terrors, and to many a weary one given it an attractive rather than a repulsive look. "I heard a voice from heaven saying" —it needed a voice from heaven to assure us of the truth—"Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord." To such the grave is, indeed, a bed of blessed rest. Buried with Jesus, they repose till the hour of the great awakening cometh, when with him they shall arise to that newness of life over which no shadow of death shall ever pass.

APPENDIX.

It is in the hope that they may win for the explanation of Christ's death presented in the preceding pages a larger measure of attention than it has yet received, that the following letters from eminent medical authorities are appended :—

From JAMES BEGBIE, M.D., F.R.S.E.

Fellow, and late President, of the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh ; Physician to the Queen in Scotland.

My dear Dr. Hanna,—I cannot help accepting, as correct, the explanation which Dr. Stroud has offered—and which you have adopted, and so strikingly applied—of the physical cause of the death of Christ, namely, rupture of the Heart, and consequent effusion of blood into the pericardium, the investing sheath of that organ.

Such a lesion accounts for the phenomena recorded in the Scriptures regarding him, namely, the earlier than usual cessation of life during crucifixion, and the issuing

of blood and water on the piercing of his side with the spear.

It must be borne in mind, however, that rupture of the Heart is comparatively a rare affection, and that the cases of it on record are, so far as I know, limited to those advanced in life, or to such as have been labouring under some degeneration of the structure of the organ, a condition which rendered it liable to be torn when subjected to the pressure of severe physical exertion, or the weight of mental agony. Now, in regard to Christ, we know that at the period of his death he was in the prime of life; and that as morally he was "holy, harmless, and undefiled," so physically he was without spot or blemish.

How intensely does this consideration magnify the sufferings he endured! We see him in the agony in the Garden, and under the bloody sweat. We follow him to Calvary, and see him under the hiding of his Father's face, bearing our sins in his own body on the tree. We cannot estimate the anguish of his holy human soul during these awful hours, when there was drawn from him that most touching language, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death;" but we can in some measure understand how his bodily frame, subjected to the full weight both of mental and bodily suffering, should yield and give way at the fountain of life, and how Christ, in his death, should thus literally

fulfil the prophetic words of Old Testament writings concerning him: "Reproach hath broken my heart." I shrink from treading farther on this sacred ground, and remain, dear Dr. Hanna, yours affectionately,

J. BEGBIE.

10, CHARLOTTE SQUARE,
EDINBURGH, 26*th April* 1862.

FROM J. Y. SIMPSON, M.D., F.R.S.E.

Professor of Medicine and Midwifery in the University of Edinburgh; and Physician-Accoucheur to the Queen in Scotland.

MY DEAR DR. HANNA,—Ever since reading, some ten or twelve years ago, Dr. Stroud's remarkable treatise *On the Physical Cause of the Death of Christ*, I have been strongly impressed with the belief that the views which he adopted[1] and maintained on this subject are fundamentally correct. Nor has this opinion been in any way altered by a perusal of some later observations published on the same question, both here and on the Continent.

That the immediate cause of the death of our blessed Saviour was—speaking medically—laceration or rupture of the heart, is a doctrine in regard to which there can

[1] Dr. Stroud himself points out that Russell, Edwards, Rambach, and other writers, had more or less correctly anticipated him in the belief that Christ had died from rupture or breaking of the heart.

be no absolute certainty; but, assuredly, in favour of it there is a very high amount of circumstantial probability.

Let me try to state the arguments for this view in the form of a few brief propositions.

I. His death was not the mere result of crucifixion; for, 1st, The period was too short; a person in the prime of life, as Christ was, not dying from this mode of mortal punishment in six hours, as He did, but usually surviving till the second or third day, or even longer. 2dly, The attendant phenomena, at the time of actual death, were different from those of crucifixion. The crucified died, as is well known, under a lingering process of gradual exhaustion, weakness, and faintness. On the contrary, Christ cried with a loud voice, and spoke once and again,—all apparently within a few minutes of His dissolution.

II. No known injury, lesion, or disease of the brain, lungs, or other vital organs could, I believe, account for such a sudden termination of His sufferings in death, except (1.) arrestment of the action of the heart by fatal fainting or syncope; or (2.) rupture of the walls of the heart or larger blood-vessels issuing from it.

III. The attendant symptoms—particularly the loud cry and subsequent exclamations—show that death was not the effect of mortal fainting, or mere fatal arrestment of the action of the heart by syncope.

IV. On the other hand, these symptoms were such as

have been seen in cases of rupture of the walls of the heart. Thus, in the latest book published in the English language on Diseases of the Heart, the eminent author, Dr. Walshe, Professor of Medicine in University College, London, when treating of the symptoms indicating death by rupture of the heart, observes, "The hand is suddenly carried to the front of the chest, a piercing shriek uttered," etc. etc. The rapidity of the resulting death is regulated by the size and shape of the ruptured opening. But usually death very speedily ensues in consequence of the blood escaping from the interior of the heart into the cavity of the large surrounding heart-sac or pericardium; which sac has, in cases of rupture of the heart, been found on dissection to contain sometimes two, three, four, or more pounds of blood accumulated within it, and separated into red clot and limpid serum, or "blood and water,"—as is seen in blood when collected out of the body in a cup or basin in the operation of common blood-letting.

V. No medical jurist would, in a court of law, venture to assert, from the mere symptoms preceding death, that a person had certainly died of rupture of the heart. To obtain positive *proof* that rupture of the heart was the cause of death, a *post-mortem* examination of the chest would be necessary. In ancient times, such dissections were not practised. But the details left regarding Christ's death are most strikingly peculiar in this

respect, that they offer us the result of a very rude dissection, as it were, by the gash[1] made in His side after death by the thrust of the Roman soldier's spear. The effect of that wounding or piercing of the side was an escape of "blood and water," visible to the Apostle John standing some distance off; and I do not believe that anything could possibly account for this appearance, as described by that Apostle, except a collection of blood effused into the distended sac of the pericardium in consequence of rupture of the heart, and afterwards separated, as is usual with *extravasated* blood, into those two parts, viz. (1.) crassamentum or red clot, and (2.) watery serum. The subsequent puncture from below of the distended pericardial sac would most certainly, under such circumstances, lead to the immediate ejection and escape of its sanguineous contents in the form of red clots of blood and a stream of watery serum, exactly corresponding to that description given in the sacred narrative, "and forthwith came there out blood *and* water,"—an appearance which no other natural event or mode of death can explain or account for.

VI. Mental emotions and passions are well known by all to affect the actions of the heart in the way of palpitation, fainting, etc. That these emotions and passions, when in overwhelming excess, occasionally though rarely,

[1] Its size may be inferred from the Apostle Thomas being asked to thrust not his "finger," but his "hand" into it.—John xx.

produce laceration or rupture of the walls of the heart, is stated by most medical authorities, who have written on the affections of this organ; and our poets even allude to this effect as an established fact,—

"The grief that does not speak
Whispers the o'er-fraught heart, and bids it break."

But if ever a human heart was riven and ruptured by the mere amount of mental agony that was endured, it would surely—we might even argue *à priori*—be that of our Redeemer, when, during these dark and dreadful hours on the cross, He, "being made a curse for us," "bore our griefs, and carried our sorrows," and suffered for sin, the malediction of God and man, "full of anguish," and now "exceeding sorrowful even unto death."

There are theological as well as medical arguments in favour of the opinion that Christ in reality died from a ruptured or broken heart. You know them infinitely better than I do. But let me merely observe that

VII. If the various wondrous prophecies and minute predictions in Psalms xxii. and lxix., regarding the circumstances connected with Christ's death be justly held as literally true, such as, "They pierced my hands and my feet," "They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture," etc., why should we regard as merely metaphorical, and not as literally true also, the declarations in the same Psalms, "Reproach hath

broken my heart," "My heart is like wax, it is melted in the midst of my bowels"? And

VIII. Death by mere crucifixion was not a form of death in which there was much, if indeed any, shedding of blood. Punctured wounds do not generally bleed; and the nails, besides being driven through parts that were not provided with large blood-vessels, necessarily remained plugging up the openings made by their passage. The whole language and types of Scripture, however, involve the idea that the atonement for our sins was obtained by the *blood* of Christ shed for us during His death on the cross. "Without shedding of blood there is no remission." This shedding, however, was assuredly done in the fullest possible sense, under the view that the immediate cause of His dissolution was rupture of the heart, and the consequent fatal escape of His heart- and life-blood from the central cistern of the circulation.

It has always appeared—to my medical mind at least—that this view of the mode by which death was produced in the human body of Christ, intensifies all our thoughts and ideas regarding the immensity of the astounding sacrifice which He made for our sinful race upon the cross. Nothing can possibly be more striking and startling than the appalling and terrible passiveness with which God as man submitted, for our sakes, His incarnate body to all the horrors and tortures

of the crucifixion. But our wonderment at the stupendous sacrifice only increases when we reflect that, whilst thus enduring for our sins the most cruel and agonizing form of corporeal death, He was ultimately "slain," not by the effects of the anguish of His corporeal frame, but by the effects of the mightier anguish of His mind; the fleshy walls of His heart—like the veil, as it were, in the temple of His human body—becoming rent and riven, as for us "He poured out His soul unto death;"—"the travail of His soul" in that awful hour thus standing out as unspeakably bitterer and more dreadful than even the travail of His body.

Believe me, my dear Dr. Hanna, ever sincerely yours,

J. Y. SIMPSON, M.D.

52, QUEEN STREET, EDINBURGH,
May 1, 1862.

FROM JOHN STRUTHERS, M.D., F.R.C.S.
Lecturer on Anatomy, Surgeons' Hall.

DEAR DR. HANNA,—I do not think that any intelligent medical man will read Dr. Stroud's treatise *On the Physical Cause of the Death of Christ*, without being satisfied with the explanation. No other hypothesis will satisfactorily explain the separate escape of blood and water from a wound in that region, and

all the incidents attending the death of Christ are entirely accounted for by the hypothesis of rupture of the heart, and the separation of the watery and the red constituents of the blood within the distended pericardium, on the puncture of which they would escape forcibly. The various cases of rupture of the heart from mental emotion, with similar separation of the watery and the red parts of the blood, collected by Dr. Stroud, and also his cases of bloody sweat, form a body of extremely interesting illustration and proof, and altogether the treatise is a monument of careful research and cautious reasoning. To medical men it has a special additional value as accounting for incidents which force themselves upon the medical mind for explanation. Those of my brethren who have not read Dr. Stroud's book, must be much puzzled, as I was before I had read it, to account for the escape of water after, and distinct from, blood, from a wound in that part of the body—supposing the words "blood and water" to be accepted literally, which there need be no hesitation now in doing. Of course, the rupture of the heart is in every aspect the great point of interest, the escape of the blood and water being of importance only as an incident which, having been seen, requires explanation, and as further bearing on the previous rupture of the heart.

To all, Dr. Stroud's treatise must be interesting, not as raising or gratifying curiosity, but as an intelligent

explanation of the incidents themselves, and, still more, as a new illustration of the awful agony which our Redeemer must have suffered. I was indebted to you for first bringing Dr. Stroud's book under my notice, and I have since repeatedly recommended it to the notice of my medical friends and students. I find lately that the first edition is now exhausted, and hope that it will not be long before a new edition of so valuable a work makes its appearance.

Believe me, with much respect, yours very sincerely,

JOHN STRUTHERS.

3, PARK PLACE, EDINBURGH,
May 1, 1862.

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